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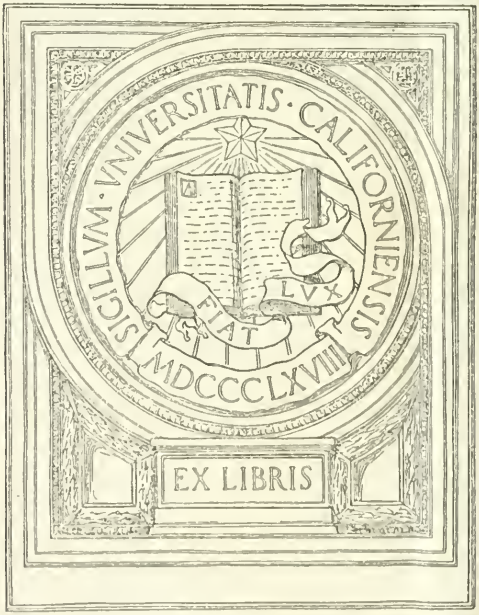

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POEMS

POEMS

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1908

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THE PROMISE IN DISTURBANCE

How low when angels fall their black descent,
Our primal thunder tells: known is the pain
Of music, that nigh throning wisdom went,
And one false note cast wailful to the insane.
Now seems the language heard of Love as rain
To make a mire where fruitfulness was meant.
The golden harp gives out a jangled strain,
Too like revolt from heaven's Omnipotent.
But listen in the thought; so may there come
Conception of a newly-added chord,
Commanding space beyond where ear has home.
In labour of the trouble at its fount,
Leads Life to an intelligible Lord
The rebel discords up the sacred mount.

MODERN LOVE

I

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed,
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

II

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in
By shutting all too zealous for their sin:
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had!
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers:
A languid humour stole among the hours,
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown
Before his vision, and the world forgot,
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown
The pit of infamy: and then again
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove
To ape the magnanimity of love,
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

III

This was the woman; what now of the man?
But pass him. If he comes beneath a heel,
He shall be crushed until he cannot feel,
Or, being callous, haply till he can.
But he is nothing: — nothing? Only mark
The rich light striking out from her on him!
Ha! what a sense it is when her eyes swim
Across the man she singles, leaving dark
All else! Lord God, who mad'st the thing so fair,
See that I am drawn to her even now!
It cannot be such harm on her cool brow
To put a kiss? Yet if I meet him there!
But she is mine! Ah, no! I know too well
I claim a star whose light is overcast:
I claim a phantom-woman in the Past.
The hour has struck, though I heard not the bell!

IV

All other joy of life he strove to warm,
And magnify, and catch them to his lip:
But they had suffered shipwreck with the ship,
And gazed upon him sallow from the storm.
Or if Delusion came, 't was but to show
The coming minute mock the one that went.
Cold as a mountain in its star-pitched tent,
Stood high Philosophy, less friend than foe:
Whom self-caged Passion, from its prison-bars,
Is always watching with a wondering hate.
Not till the fire is dying in the grate,
Look we for any kinship with the stars.
Oh, wisdom never comes when it is gold,
And the great price we pay for it full worth:
We have it only when we are half earth.
Little avails that coinage to the old!

V

A message from her set his brain aflame.
A world of household matters filled her mind,
Wherein he saw hypocrisy designed:
She treated him as something that is tame,
And but at other provocation bites.
Familiar was her shoulder in the glass,
Through that dark rain: yet it may come to pass
That a changed eye finds such familiar sights
More keenly tempting than new loveliness.
The 'What has been' a moment seemed his own:
The splendours, mysteries, dearer because known,
Nor less divine: Love's inmost sacredness,
Called to him, 'Come!'—In his restraining start,
Eyes nurtured to be looked at, scarce could see
A wave of the great waves of Destiny
Convulsed at a checked impulse of the heart.

VI

It chanced his lips did meet her forehead cool.
She had no blush, but slanted down her eye.
Shamed nature, then, confesses love can die:
And most she punishes the tender fool
Who will believe what honours her the most!
Dead! is it dead? She has a pulse, and flow
Of tears, the price of blood-drops, as I know,
For whom the midnight sobs around Love's ghost,
Since then I heard her, and so will sob on.
The love is here; it has but changed its aim.
O bitter barren woman! what 's the name?
The name, the name, the new name thou hast won?
Behold me striking the world's coward stroke!
That will I not do, though the sting is dire.
— Beneath the surface this, while by the fire
They sat, she laughing at a quiet joke.

VII

She issues radiant from her dressing-room,
Like one prepared to scale an upper sphere:
— By stirring up a lower, much I fear!
How deftly that oiled barber lays his bloom!
That long-shanked dapper Cupid with frisked curls,
Can make known women torturingly fair;
The gold-eyed serpent dwelling in rich hair,
Awakes beneath his magic whisks and twirls.
His art can take the eyes from out my head,
Until I see with eyes of other men;
While deeper knowledge crouches in its den,
And sends a spark up: — is it true we are wed?
Yea! filthiness of body is most vile,
But faithlessness of heart I do hold worse.
The former, it were not so great a curse
To read on the steel-mirror of her smile.

VIII

Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt
Of righteous feeling made her pitiful.
Poor twisting worm, so queenly beautiful!
Where came the cleft between us? whose the fault?
My tears are on thee, that have rarely dropped
As balm for any bitter wound of mine:
My breast will open for thee at a sign!
But, no: we are two reed-pipes, coarsely stopped:
The God once filled them with his mellow breath;
And they were music till he flung them down,
Used! used! Hear now the discord-loving clown
Puff his gross spirit in them, worse than death!
I do not know myself without thee more:
In this unholy battle I grow base:
If the same soul be under the same face,
Speak, and a taste of that old time restore!

IX

He felt the wild beast in him betweenwhiles
So masterfully rude, that he would grieve
To see the helpless delicate thing receive
His guardianship through certain dark defiles.
Had he not teeth to rend, and hunger too?
But still he spared her. Once: 'Have you no fear?'
He said: 't was dusk; she in his grasp; none near.
She laughed: 'No, surely; am I not with you?'
And uttering that soft starry 'you,' she leaned
Her gentle body near him, looking up;
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,
He drank until the flittering eyelids screened.
Devilish malignant witch! and oh, young beam
Of heaven's circle-glory! Here thy shape
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape —
I might, and yet thou goest safe, supreme.

X

But where began the change; and what 's my crime?
The wretch condemned, who has not been arraigned,
Chafes at his sentence. Shall I, unsustained,
Drag on Love's nerveless body thro' all time?
I must have slept, since now I wake. Prepare,
You lovers, to know Love a thing of moods:
Not like hard life, of laws. In Love's deep woods,
I dreamt of loyal Life: — the offence is there!
Love's jealous woods about the sun are curled;
At least, the sun far brighter there did beam. —
My crime is, that the puppet of a dream,
I plotted to be worthy of the world.
Oh, had I with my darling helped to mince
The facts of life, you still had seen me go
With hindward feather and with forward toe,
Her much-adored delightful Fairy Prince!

XI

Out in the yellow meadows, where the bee
Hums by us with the honey of the Spring,
And showers of sweet notes from the larks on wing,
Are dropping like a noon-dew, wander we.
Or is it now? or was it then? for now,
As then, the larks from running rings pour showers:
The golden foot of May is on the flowers,
And friendly shadows dance upon her brow.
What 's this, when Nature swears there is no change
To challenge eyesight? Now, as then, the grace
Of heaven seems holding earth in its embrace.
Nor eyes, nor heart, has she to feel it strange?
Look, woman, in the West. There wilt thou see
An amber cradle near the sun's decline:
Within it, featured even in death divine,
Is lying a dead infant, slain by thee.

XII

Not solely that the Future she destroys,
And the fair life which in the distance lies
For all men, beckoning out from dim rich skies:
Nor that the passing hour's supporting joys
Have lost the keen-edged flavour, which begat
Distinction in old times, and still should breed
Sweet Memory, and Hope, — earth's modest seed,
And heaven's high-prompting: not that the world is flat
Since that soft-luring creature I embraced,
Among the children of Illusion went:
Methinks with all this loss I were content,
If the mad Past, on which my foot is based,
Were firm, or might be blotted: but the whole
Of life is mixed: the mocking Past will stay:
And if I drink oblivion of a day,
So shorten I the stature of my soul.

XIII

'I play for Seasons; not Eternities!'
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust!'
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies
She is full sure! Upon her dying rose,
She drops a look of fondness, and goes by,
Scarce any retrospection in her eye;
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag — there, an urn.
Pledged she herself to aught, 't would mark her end!
This lesson of our only visible friend,
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?
Yes! yes! — but, oh, our human rose is fair
Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
When the renewed for ever of a kiss
Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

XIV

What soul would bargain for a cure that brings
Contempt the nobler agony to kill ?
Rather let me bear on the bitter ill,
And strike this rusty bosom with new stings!
It seems there is another veering fit,
Since on a gold-haired lady's eyeballs pure,
I looked with little prospect of a cure,
The while her mouth's red bow loosed shafts of wit.
Just heaven! can it be true that jealousy
Has decked the woman thus ? and does her head
Swim somewhat for possessions forfeited ?
Madam, you teach me many things that be.
I open an old book, and there I find,
That 'Women still may love whom they deceive.'
Such love I prize not, madam: by your leave,
The game you play at is not to my mind.

XV

I think she sleeps: it must be sleep, when low
Hangs that abandoned arm toward the floor;
The face turned with it. Now make fast the door.
Sleep on: it is your husband, not your foe.
The Poet's black stage-lion of wronged love,
Frights not our modern dames: — well if he did!
Now will I pour new light upon that lid,
Full-sloping like the breasts beneath. 'Sweet dove,
Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon: I disturb.
I do not? good!' Her waking infant-stare
Grows woman to the burden my hands bear:
Her own handwriting to me when no curb
Was left on Passion's tongue. She trembles through;
A woman's tremble — the whole instrument: —
I show another letter lately sent.
The words are very like: the name is new.

XVI

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,
When in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us: and hushed we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. 'Ah, yes!
Love dies!' I said: I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift: —
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

XVII

At dinner, she is hostess, I am host.
Went the feast ever cheerfuller? She keeps
The Topic over intellectual deeps
In buoyancy afloat. They see no ghost.
With sparkling surface-eyes we ply the ball:
It is in truth a most contagious game:
Hiding the Skeleton, shall be its name.
Such play as this, the devils might appal!
But here's the greater wonder; in that we
Enamoured of an acting nought can tire,
Each other, like true hypocrites, admire;
Warm-lighted looks, Love's ephemerioe,
Shoot gaily o'er the dishes and the wine.
We waken envy of our happy lot.
Fast, sweet, and golden, shows the marriage-knot.
Dear guests, you now have seen Love's corpse-light shine.

XVIII

Here Jack and Tom are paired with Moll and Meg.
Curved open to the river-reach is seen
A country merry-making on the green.
Fair space for signal shakings of the leg.
That little screwy fiddler from his booth,
Whence flows one nut-brown stream, commands the joints
Of all who caper here at various points.
I have known rustic revels in my youth:
The May-fly pleasures of a mind at ease.
An early goddess was a county lass:
A charmed Amphion-oak she tripped the grass.
What life was that I lived? The life of these?
Heaven keep them happy! Nature they seem near.
They must, I think, be wiser than I am;
They have the secret of the bull and lamb.
'T is true that when we trace its source, 't is beer.

XIX

No state is enviable. To the luck alone
Of some few favoured men I would put claim.
I bleed, but her who wounds I will not blame.
Have I not felt her heart as 't were my own
Beat thro' me? could I hurt her? heaven and hell!
But I could hurt her cruelly! Can I let
My Love's old time-piece to another set,
Swear it can't stop, and must for ever swell?
Sure, that 's one way Love drifts into the mart
Where goat-legged buyers throng. I see not plain: —
My meaning is, it must not be again.
Great God! the maddest gambler throws his heart.
If any state be enviable on earth,
'T is yon born idiot's, who, as days go by,
Still rubs his hands before him, like a fly,
In a queer sort of meditative mirth.

XX

I am not of those miserable males
Who sniff at vice, and, daring not to snap,
Do therefore hope for heaven. I take the hap
Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails,
Propels; but I am helmsman. Am I wrecked,
I know the devil has sufficient weight
To bear: I lay it not on him, or fate.
Besides, he 's damned. That man I do suspect
A coward, who would burden the poor deuce
With what ensues from his own slipperiness.
I have just found a wanton-scented tress
In an old desk, dusty for lack of use.
Of days and nights it is demonstrative,
That, like some aged star, gleam luridly.
If for those times I must ask charity,
Have I not any charity to give?

XXI

We three are on the cedar-shadowed lawn;
My friend being third. He who at love once laughed,
Is in the weak rib by a fatal shaft
Struck through, and tells his passion's bashful dawn
And radiant culmination, glorious crown,
When 'this' she said: went 'thus': most wondrous she.
Our eyes grow white, encountering: that we are three,
Forgetful; then together we look down.
But he demands our blessing; is convinced
That words of wedded lovers must bring good.
We question; if we dare! or if we should!
And pat him, with light laugh. We have not winced.
Next, she has fallen. Fainting points the sign
To happy things in wedlock. When she wakes,
She looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes:
Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine.

XXII

What may the woman labour to confess?
There is about her mouth a nervous twitch.
'T is something to be told, or hidden: — which?
I get a glimpse of hell in this mild guess.
She has desires of touch, as if to feel
That all the household things are things she knew.
She stops before the glass. What sight in view?
A face that seems the latest to reveal!
For she turns from it hastily, and tossed
Irresolute, steals shadow-like to where
I stand; and wavering pale before me there,
Her tears fall still as oak-leaves after frost.
She will not speak. I will not ask. We are
League-sundered by the silent gulf between.
You burly lovers on the village green,
Yours is a lower, and a happier star!

XXIII

'T is Christmas weather, and a country house
Receives us: rooms are full: we can but get
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret
At that, it is half-said. The great carouse
Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door,
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.
Why did I come here in that dullard fit?
I enter, and lie couched upon the floor.
Passing, I caught the coverlet's quick beat: —
Come, Shame, burn to my soul! and Pride, and Pain —
Foul demons that have tortured me, enchain!
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.
I know not how, but shuddering as I slept,
I dreamed a banished angel to me crept:
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night.

XXIV

The misery is greater, as I live!
To know her flesh so pure, so keen her sense,
That she does penance now for no offence,
Save against Love. The less can I forgive!
The less can I forgive, though I adore
That cruel lovely pallor which surrounds
Her footsteps; and the low vibrating sounds
That come on me, as from a magic shore.
Low are they, but most subtle to find out
The shrinking soul. Madam, 't is understood
When women play upon their womanhood;
It means, a Season gone. And yet I doubt
But I am duped. That nun-like look waylays
My fancy. Oh! I do but wait a sign!
Pluck out the eyes of pride! thy mouth to mine!
Never! though I die thirsting. Go thy ways!

XXV

You like not that French novel? Tell me why.
You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.
The actors are, it seems, the usual three:
Husband, and wife, and lover. She — but fie!
In England we 'll not hear of it. Edmond,
The lover, her devout chagrin doth share;
Blanc-mange and absinthe are his penitent fare,
Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond:
So, to preclude fresh sin, he tries rosbif.
Meantime the husband is no more abused:
Auguste forgives her ere the tear is used.
Then hangeth all on one tremendous If: —
If she will choose between them. She does choose;
And takes her husband, like a proper wife.
Unnatural? My dear, these things are life:
And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse.

XXVI

Love ere he bleeds, an eagle in high skies,
Has earth beneath his wings: from reddened eve
He views the rosy dawn. In vain they weave
The fatal web below while far he flies.
But when the arrow strikes him, there 's a change.
He moves but in the track of his spent pain,
Whose red drops are the links of a harsh chain,
Binding him to the ground, with narrow range.
A subtle serpent then has Love become.
I had the eagle in my bosom erst:
Henceforward with the serpent I am cursed.
I can interpret where the mouth is dumb.
Speak, and I see the side-lie of a truth.
Perchance my heart may pardon you this deed:
But be no coward: — you that made Love bleed,
You must bear all the venom of his tooth!

XXVII

Distraction is the panacea, Sir!
I hear my oracle of Medicine say.
Doctor! that same specific yesterday
I tried, and the result will not deter
A second trial. Is the devil's line
Of golden hair, or raven black, composed?
And does a cheek, like any sea-shell rosed,
Or clear as widowed sky, seem most divine?
No matter, so I taste forgetfulness.
And if the devil snare me, body and mind,
Here gratefully I score: — he seemëd kind,
When not a soul would comfort my distress!
O sweet new world, in which I rise new made!
O Lady, once I gave love: now I take!
Lady, I must be flattered. Shouldst thou wake
The passion of a demon, be not afraid.

XXVIII

I must be flattered. The imperious
Desire speaks out. Lady, I am content
To play with you the game of Sentiment,
And with you enter on paths perilous;
But if across your beauty I throw light,
To make it threefold, it must be all mine.
First secret; then avowed. For I must shine
Envied, — I, lessened in my proper sight!
Be watchful of your beauty, Lady dear!
How much hangs on that lamp you cannot tell.
Most earnestly I pray you, tend it well:
And men shall see me as a burning sphere;
And men shall mark you eyeing me, and groan
To be the God of such a grand sunflower!
I feel the promptings of Satanic power,
While you do homage unto me alone.

XXIX

Am I failing? For no longer can I cast
A glory round about this head of gold.
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould;
Not like the consecration of the Past!
Is my soul beggared? Something more than earth
I cry for still: I cannot be at peace
In having Love upon a mortal lease.
I cannot take the woman at her worth!
Where is the ancient wealth wherewith I clothed
Our human nakedness, and could endow
With spiritual splendour a white brow
That else had grinned at me the fact I loathed?
A kiss is but a kiss now! and no wave
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.
But, as you will! we 'll sit contentedly,
And eat our pot of honey on the grave.

XXX

What are we first? First, animals; and next
Intelligences at a leap; on whom
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,
And all that draweth on the tomb for text.
Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun:
Beneath whose light the shadow loses form.
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.
Intelligence and instinct now are one.
But nature says: 'My children most they seem
When they least know me: therefore I decree
That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,
And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.
Then if we study Nature we are wise.
Thus do the few who live but with the day:
The scientific animals are they. —
Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

XXXI

This golden head has wit in it. I live
Again, and a far higher life, near her.
Some women like a young philosopher;
Perchance because he is diminutive.
For woman's manly god must not exceed
Proportions of the natural nursing size.
Great poets and great sages draw no prize
With women: but the little lap-dog breed,
Who can be hugged, or on a mantel-piece
Perched up for adoration, these obtain
Her homage. And of this we men are vain?
Of this! 'T is ordered for the world's increase!
Small flattery! Yet she has that rare gift
To beauty, Common Sense. I am approved.
It is not half so nice as being loved,
And yet I do prefer it. What 's my drift?

XXXII

Full faith I have she holds that rarest gift
To beauty, Common Sense. To see her lie
With her fair visage an inverted sky
Bloom-covered, while the underlids uplift,
Would almost wreck the faith; but when her mouth
(Can it kiss sweetly? sweetly!) would address
The inner me that thirsts for her no less,
And has so long been languishing in drouth,
I feel that I am matched; that I am man!
One restless corner of my heart or head,
That holds a dying something never dead,
Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.
It means, that woman is not, I opine,
Her sex's antidote. Who seeks the asp
For serpent's bites? 'T would calm me could I clasp
Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine!

XXXIII

'In Paris, at the Louvre, there have I seen
The sumptuously-feathered angel pierce
Prone Lucifer, descending. Looked he fierce,
Showing the fight a fair one? Too serene!
The young Pharsalians did not disarray
Less willingly their locks of floating silk:
That suckling mouth of his, upon the milk
Of heaven might still be feasting through the fray.
Oh, Raphael! when men the Fiend do fight,
They conquer not upon such easy terms.
Half serpent in the struggle grow these worms.
And does he grow half human, all is right.'
This to my Lady in a distant spot,
Upon the theme: *While mind is mastering clay,*
Gross clay invades it. If the spy you play,
My wife, read this! Strange love talk, is it not?

XXXIV

Madam would speak with me. So, now it comes:
The Deluge or else Fire! She 's well; she thanks
My husbandship. Our chain on silence clanks.
Time leers between, above his twiddling thumbs.
Am I quite well? Most excellent in health!
The journals, too, I diligently peruse.
Vesuvius is expected to give news:
Niagara is no noisier. By stealth
Our eyes dart scrutinizing snakes. She 's glad
I 'm happy, says her quivering under-lip.
'And are not you?' 'How can I be?' 'Take ship!
For happiness is somewhere to be had.'
'Nowhere for me!' Her voice is barely heard.
I am not melted, and make no pretence.
With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.
Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred.

XXXV

It is no vulgar nature I have wived.
Secretive, sensitive, she takes a wound
Deep to her soul, as if the sense had swooned,
And not a thought of vengeance had survived.
No confidences has she: but relief
Must come to one whose suffering is acute.
O have a care of natures that are mute!
They punish you in acts: their steps are brief.
What is she doing? What does she demand
From Providence or me? She is not one
Long to endure this torpidly, and shun
The drugs that crowd about a woman's hand.
At Forfeits during snow we played, and I
Must kiss her. 'Well performed!' I said: then she:
''T is hardly worth the money, you agree?'
Save her? What for? To act this wedded lie!

XXXVI

My Lady unto Madam makes her bow.
The charm of women is, that even while
You 're probed by them for tears, you yet may smile,
Nay, laugh outright, as I have done just now.
The interview was gracious: they anoint
(To me aside) each other with fine praise:
Discriminating compliments they raise,
That hit with wondrous aim on the weak point:
My Lady's nose of Nature might complain.
It is not fashioned aptly to express
Her character of large-browed steadfastness.
But Madam says: Thereof she may be vain!
Now, Madam's faulty feature is a glazed
And inaccessible eye, that has soft fires,
Wide gates, at love-time only. This admires
My Lady. At the two I stand amazed.

XXXVII

Along the garden terrace, under which
A purple valley (lighted at its edge
By smoky torch-flame on the long cloud-ledge
Whereunder dropped the chariot), glimmers rich,
A quiet company we pace, and wait
The dinner-bell in prae-digestive calm.
So sweet up violet banks the Southern balm
Breathes round, we care not if the bell be late:
Though here and there grey seniors question Time
In irritable coughings. With slow foot
The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute,
Begins among her silent bars to climb.
As in and out, in silvery dusk, we thread,
I hear the laugh of Madam, and discern
My Lady's heel before me at each turn.
Our tragedy, is it alive or dead?

XXXVIII

Give to imagination some pure light
In human form to fix it, or you shame
The devils with that hideous human game: —
Imagination urging appetite!
Thus fallen have earth's greatest Gogmagogs,
Who dazzle us, whom we can not revere:
Imagination is the charioteer
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.
So, therefore, my dear Lady, let me love!
My soul is arrowy to the light in you.
You know me that I never can renew
The bond that woman broke: what would you have?
'T is Love, or Vileness! not a choice between,
Save petrifaction! What does Pity here?
She killed a thing, and now it 's dead, 't is dear.
Oh, when you counsel me, think what you mean!

XXXIX

She yields: my Lady in her noblest mood
Has yielded: she, my golden-crownëd rose!
The bride of every sense! more sweet than those
Who breathe the violet breath of maidenhood.
O visage of still music in the sky!
Soft moon! I feel thy song, my fairest friend!
True harmony within can apprehend
Dumb harmony without. And hark! 't is nigh!
Belief has struck the note of sound: a gleam
Of living silver shows me where she shook
Her long white fingers down the shadowy brook,
That sings her song, half waking, half in dream.
What two come here to mar this heavenly tune?
A man is one: the woman bears my name,
And honour. Their hands touch! Am I still tame?
God, what a dancing spectre seems the moon!

XL

I bade my Lady think what she might mean.
Know I my meaning, I? Can I love one,
And yet be jealous of another? None
Commits such folly. Terrible Love, I ween,
Has might, even dead, half sighing to upheave
The lightless seas of selfishness amain:
Seas that in a man's heart have no rain
To fall and still them. Peace can I achieve,
By turning to this fountain-source of woe,
This woman, who 's to Love as fire to wood?
She breathed the violet breath of maidenhood
Against my kisses once! but I say, No!
The thing is mocked at! Helplessly afloat,
I know not what I do, whereto I strive,
The dread that my old love may be alive,
Has seized my nursling new love by the throat.

XLI

How many a thing which we cast to the ground,
When others pick it up becomes a gem!
We grasp at all the wealth it is to them;
And by reflected light its worth is found.
Yet for us still 't is nothing! and that zeal
Of false appreciation quickly fades.
This truth is little known to human shades,
How rare from their own instinct 't is to feel!
They waste the soul with spurious desire,
That is not the ripe flame upon the bough.
We two have taken up a lifeless vow
To rob a living passion: dust for fire!
Madam is grave, and eyes the clock that tells
Approaching midnight. We have struck despair
Into two hearts. O, look we like a pair
Who for fresh nuptials joyfully yield all else?

XLII

I am to follow her. There is much grace
In woman when thus bent on martyrdom.
They think that dignity of soul may come,
Perchance, with dignity of body. Base!
But I was taken by that air of cold
And statuesque sedateness, when she said
'I 'm going'; lit a taper, bowed her head,
And went, as with the stride of Pallas bold.
Fleshly indifference horrible! The hands
Of Time now signal: O, she 's safe from me!
Within those secret walls what do I see?
Where first she set the taper down she stands:
Not Pallas: Hebe shamed! Thoughts black as death,
Like a stirred pool in sunshine break. Her wrists
I catch: she faltering, as she half resists,
'You love . . . ? love . . . ? love . . . ?' all on an indrawn
breath.

XLIII

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like,
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid
The full-waked sense; or failing that, degrade!
'T is morning: but no morning can restore
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

XLIV

They say, that Pity in Love's service dwells,
A porter at the rosy temple's gate.
I missed him going: but it is my fate
To come upon him now beside his wells;
Whereby I know that I Love's temple leave,
And that the purple doors have closed behind.
Poor soul! if in those early days unkind,
Thy power to sting had been but power to grieve,
We now might with an equal spirit meet,
And not be matched like innocence and vice.
She for the Temple's worship has paid price,
And takes the coin of Pity as a cheat.
She sees through simulation to the bone:
What's best in her impels her to the worst:
Never, she cries, shall Pity soothe Love's thirst,
Or foul hypocrisy for truth atone!

XLV

It is the season of the sweet wild rose,
My Lady's emblem in the heart of me!
So golden-crownëd shines she gloriously,
And with that softest dream of blood she glows:
Mild as an evening heaven round Hesper bright!
I pluck the flower, and smell it, and revive
The time when in her eyes I stood alive.
I seem to look upon it out of Night.
Here 's Madam, stepping hastily. Her whims
Bid her demand the flower, which I let drop.
As I proceed, I feel her sharply stop,
And crush it under heel with trembling limbs.
She joins me in a cat-like way, and talks
Of company, and even condescends
To utter laughing scandal of old friends.
These are the summer days, and these our walks.

XLVI

At last we parley: we so strangely dumb
In such a close communion! It befell
About the sounding of the Matin-bell,
And lo! her place was vacant, and the hum
Of loneliness was round me. Then I rose,
And my disordered brain did guide my foot
To that old wood where our first love-salute
Was interchanged: the source of many throes!
There did I see her, not alone. I moved
Toward her, and made proffer of my arm.
She took it simply, with no rude alarm;
And that disturbing shadow passed reproved.
I felt the pained speech coming, and declared
My firm belief in her, ere she could speak.
A ghastly morning came into her cheek,
While with a widening soul on me she stared.

XLVII

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
Where I have seen across the twilight wave
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

XLVIII

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,
Destroyed by subtleties these women are!
More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar
Utterly this fair garden we might win.
Behold! I looked for peace, and thought it near.
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.
Alas! that was the fatal draught, I fear.
For when of my lost Lady came the word,
This woman, O this agony of flesh!
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,
That I might seek that other like a bird.
I do adore the nobleness! despise
The act! She has gone forth, I know not where.
Will the hard world my sentience of her share?
I feel the truth; so let the world surmise.

XLIX

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,
Nor any wicked change in her discerned;
And she believed his old love had returned,
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,
And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.
She dared not say, 'This is my breast: look in.'
But there 's a strength to help the desperate weak.
That night he learned how silence best can speak
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.
About the middle of the night her call
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
'Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!' she said.
Lethe had passed those lips, and he knew all.

L

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:
The union of this ever-diverse pair!
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:
But they fed not on the advancing hours:
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY

I

One fairest of the ripe unwedded left
Her shadow on the Sage's path; he found,
By common signs, that she had done a theft.
He could have made the sovereign heights resound
With questions of the wherefore of her state:
He on far other but an hour before
Intent. And was it man, or was it mate,
That she disdained? or was there haply more?

About her mouth a placid humour slipped
The dimple, as you see smooth lakes at eve
Spread melting rings where late a swallow dipped.
The surface was attentive to receive,
The secret underneath enfolded fast.
She had the step of the unconquered, brave,
Not arrogant; and if the vessel's mast
Waved liberty, no challenge did it wave.
Her eyes were the sweet world desired of souls,
With something of a wavering line unspelt.
They held the look whose tenderness condoles
For what the sister in the look has dealt

Of fatal beyond healing; and her tones
A woman's honeyed amorous outvied,
As when in a dropped viol the wood-throb moans
Among the sobbing strings, that plain and chide
Like infants for themselves, less deep to thrill
Than those rich mother-notes for them breathed round.
Those voices are not magic of the will
To strike love's wound, but of love's wound give sound,
Conveying it; the yearnings, pains and dreams.
They waft to the moist tropics after storm,
When out of passion spent thick incense steams,
And jewel-belted clouds the wreck transform.
Was never hand on brush or lyre to paint
Her gracious manners, where the nuptial ring
Of melody clasped motion in restraint:
The reed-blade with the breeze thereof may sing.
With such endowments armed was she and decked
To make her spoken thoughts eclipse her kind;
Surpassing many a giant intellect,
The marvel of that cradled infant mind.
It clenched the tiny fist, it curled the toe;
Cherubic laughed, enticed, dispensed, absorbed;
And promised in fair feminine to grow
A Sage's match and mate, more heavenly orbed.

II

Across his path the spouseless Lady cast
Her shadow, and the man that thing became.
His youth uprising called his age the Past.
This was the strong grey head of laurelled name,

And in his bosom an inverted Sage
Mistook for light of morn the light which sank.
But who while veins run blood shall know the page
Succeeding ere we turn upon our blank?
Comes Beauty with her tale of moon and cloud,
Her silvered rims of mystery pointing in
To hollows of the half-veiled unavowed,
Where beats her secret life, grey heads will spin
Quick as the young, and spell those hieroglyphs
Of phosphorescent dusk devoutly bent;
They drink a cup to whirl on dizzier cliffs
For their shamed fall, which asks, why was she sent!
Why, and of whom, and whence; and tell they truth,
The legends of her mission to beguile?

Hard likeness to the toilful apes of youth,
He bore at times, and tempted the sly smile;
And not on her soft lips was it descried.
She stepped her way benevolently grave:
Nor sign that Beauty fed her worm of pride,
By tossing victim to the courtier knave,
Let peep, nor of the naughty pride gave sign.
Rather 't was humbleness in being pursued,
As pilgrim to the temple of a shrine.
Had he not wits to pierce the mask he wooed?
All wisdom's armoury this man could wield;
And if the cynic in the Sage it pleased,
Traverse her woman's curtain and poor shield,
For new example of a world diseased;
Showing her shrineless, not a temple, bare;
A curtain ripped to tatters by the blast.

Yet she most surely to this man stood fair:
He worshipped like the young enthusiast,
Named simpleton or poet. Did he read
Right through, and with the voice she held reserved
Amid her vacant ruins jointly plead?

Compassion for the man thus noble nerved
The pity for herself she felt in him,
To wreak a deed of sacrifice, and save;
At least, be worthy. That our soul may swim,
We sink our heart down bubbling under wave.
It bubbles till it drops among the wrecks.
But, ah! confession of a woman's breast:
She eminent, she honoured of her sex!
Truth speaks, and takes the spots of the confessed,
To veil them. None of women, save their vile,
Plays traitor to an army in the field.
The cries most vindicating most defile.
How shall a cause to Nature be appealed,
When, under pressure of their common foe,
Her sisters shun the Mother and disown,
On pain of his intolerable crow
Above the fiction, built for him, o'erthrown?
Irrational he is, irrational
Must they be, though not Reason's light shall wane
In them with ever Nature at close call,
Behind the fiction torturing to sustain;
Who hear her in the milk, and sometimes make
A tongueless answer, shivered on a sigh:
Whereat men dread their lofty structure's quake
Once more, and in their hosts for tocsin ply

The crazy roar of peril, leonine
For injured majesty. That sigh of dames
Is rare and soon suppressed. Not they combine
To shake the structure sheltering them, which tames
Their lustier if not wilder: fixed are they,
In elegancy scarce denoting ease;
And do they breathe, it is not to betray
The martyr in the caryatides.
Yet here and there along the graceful row
Is one who fetches breath from deeps, who deems,
Moved by a desperate craving, their old foe
May yield a trustier friend than woman seems,
And aid to bear the sculptured floral weight
Massed upon heads not utterly of stone:
May stamp endurance by expounding fate.
She turned to him, and, This you seek is gone;
Look in, she said, as pants the furnace, brief,
Frost-white. She gave his hearing sight to view
The silent chamber of a brown curled leaf:
Thing that had throbbed ere shot black lightning through.
No further sign of heart could he discern:
The picture of her speech was winter sky;
A headless figure folding a cleft urn,
Where tears once at the overflow were dry.

III

So spake she her first utterance on the rack.
It softened torment, in the funeral hues
Round wan Romance at ebb, but drove her back
To listen to herself, herself accuse

Harshly as Love's imperial cause allowed.
She meant to grovel, and her lover praised
So high o'er the condemnatory crowd,
That she perforce a fellow phoenix blazed.

The picture was of hand fast joined to hand,
Both pushed from angry skies, their grasp more pledged
Under the threatened flash of a bright brand
At arm's length up, for severing action edged.
Why, then Love's Court of Honour contemplate;
And two drowned shorecasts, who, for the life esteemed
Above their lost, invoke an advocate
In passion's purity, thereby redeemed.

Redeemed, uplifted, glimmering on a throne,
The woman stricken by an arrow falls.
His advocate she can be, not her own,
If, Traitress to thy sex! one sister calls.

Have we such scenes of drapery's mournfulness
On Beauty's revelations, witched we plant,
Over the fair shape humbled to confess,
An angel's buckler, with loud choric chant.

IV

No knightly sword to serve, nor harp of bard,
The lady's hand in her physician's knew.
She had not hoped for them as her award,
When zig-zag on the tongue electric flew
Her charge of counter-motives, none impure:
But muteness whipped her skin. She could have said,

Her free confession was to work his cure,
Show proofs for why she could not love or wed.
Were they not shown? His muteness shook in thrall
Her body on the verge of that black pit
Sheer from the treacherous confessional,
Demanding further, while perusing it.

Slave is the open mouth beneath the closed.
She sank; she snatched at colours; they were peel
Of fruit past savour, in derision rosed.
For the dark downward then her soul did reel.
A press of hideous impulse urged to speak:
A novel dread of man enchained her dumb.
She felt the silence thicken, heard it shriek,
Heard Life subsiding on the eternal hum:
Welcome to women, when, between man's laws
And Nature's thirsts, they, soul from body torn,
Give suck at breast to a celestial cause,
Named by the mouth infernal, and forsworn.

Nathless her forehead twitched a sad content,
To think the cure so manifest, so frail
Her charm remaining. Was the curtain's rent
Too wide? he but a man of that herd male?
She saw him as that herd of the forked head
Butting the woman harrowed on her knees,
Clothed only in life's last devouring red.
Confession at her fearful instant sees
Judicial Silence write the devil fact
In letters of the skeleton: at once,
Swayed on the supplication of her act,
The rabble reading, roaring to denounce,

She joins. No longer colouring, with skips
At tangles, picture that for eyes in tears
Might swim the sequence, she addressed her lips
To do the scaffold's office at his ears.

Into the bitter judgement of that herd
On women, she, deeming it present, fell.
Her frenzy of abasement hugged the word
They stone with, and so pile their citadel
To launch at outcasts the foul levin bolt.
As had he flung it, in her breast it burned.
Face and reflect it did her hot revolt
From hardness, to the writhing rebel turned;
Because the golden buckler was withheld,
She to herself applies the powder-spark,
For joy of one wild demon burst ere quelled,
Perishing to astound the tyrant Dark.

She had the Scriptural word so scored on brain,
It rang through air to sky, and rocked a world
That danced down shades the scarlet dance profane;
Most women! see! by the man's view dustward hurled,
Impenitent, submissive, torn in two.
They sink upon their nature, the unnamed,
And sops of nourishment may get some few,
In place of understanding scourged and shamed.

Barely have seasoned women understood
The great Irrational, who thunders power,
Drives Nature to her primitive wild wood,
And courts her in the covert's dewy hour;

Returning to his fortress nigh night's end,
With execration of her daughters' lures.
They help him the proud fortress to defend,
Nor see what front it wears, what life immures,
The murder it commits; nor that its base
Is shifty as a huckster's opening deal
For bargain under smoothest market face,
While Gentleness bids frigid Justice feel,
Justice protests that Reason is her seat;
Elect Convenience, as Reason masked,
Hears calmly cramped Humanity entreat;
Until a sentient world is overtasked,
And rouses Reason's fountain-self: she calls
On Nature; Nature answers: Share your guilt
In common when contention cracks the walls
Of the big house which not on me is built.

The Lady said as much as breath will bear;
To happier sisters inconceivable:
Contemptible to veterans of the fair,
Who show for a convolving pearly shell,
A treasure of the shore, their written book.
As much as woman's breath will bear and live,
Shaped she to words beneath a knotted look,
That held as if for grain the summing sieve.

Her judge now brightened without pause, as wakes
Our homely daylight after dread of spells.
Lips sugared to let loose the little snakes
Of slimy lustres ringing elfin bells
About a story of the naked flesh,
Intending but to put some garment on,

Should learn, that in the subject they enmesh,
A traitor lurks and will be known anon.
Delusion heating pricks the torpid doubt,
Stationed for index down an ancient track:
And ware of it was he while she poured out,
A broken moon on forest-waters black.

Though past the stage where midway men are skilled
To scan their senses wriggling under plough,
When yet to the charmed seed of speech distilled,
Their hearts are fallow, he, and witless how,
Loathing, had yielded, like bruised limb to leech,
Not handsomely; but now beholding bleed
Soul of the woman in her prostrate speech,
The valour of that rawness he could read.
Thence flashed it, as the crimson currents ran
From senses up to thoughts, how she had read
Maternally the warm remainder man
Beneath his crust, and Nature's pity shed,
In shedding dearer than heart's blood to light
His vision of the path mild Wisdom walks.
Therewith he could espy Confession's fright;
Her need of him: these flowers grow on stalks;
They suck from soil, and have their urgencies
Beside and with the lovely face mid leaves.
Veins of divergencies, convergencies,
Our botanist in womankind perceives;
And if he hugs no wound, the man can prize
That splendid consummation and sure proof
Of more than heart in her, who might despise,
Who drowns herself, for pity up aloof

To soar and be like Nature's pity: she
Instinctive of what virtue in young days
Had served him for his pilot-star on sea,
To trouble him in haven. Thus his gaze
Came out of rust, and more than the schooled tongue
Was gifted to encourage and assure.
He gave her of the deep well she had sprung;
And name it gratitude, the word is poor.
But name it gratitude, is aught as rare
From sex to sex? And let it have survived
Their conflict, comes the peace between the pair,
Unknown to thousands husbanded and wived:
Unknown to Passion, generous for prey:
Unknown to Love, too blissful in a truce.
Their tenderest of self did each one slay;
His cloak of dignity, her fleur de luce;
Her lily flower, and his abolla cloak,
Things living, slew they, and no artery bled.
A moment of some sacrificial smoke,
They passed, and were the dearer for their dead.

He learnt how much we gain who make no claims.
A nightcap on his flicker of grey fire,
Was thought of her sharp shudder in the flames,
Confessing; and its conjured image dire,
Of love, the torrent on the valley dashed;
The whirlwind swathing tremulous peaks; young force,
Visioned to hold corrected and abashed
Our senile emulous; which rolls its course
Proud to the shattering end; with these few last
Hot quintessential drops of bryony juice,

Squeezed out in anguish: all of that once vast!
And still, though having skin for man's abuse,
Though no more glorying in the beauteous wreath
Shot skyward from a blood at passionate jet,
Repenting but in words, that stand as teeth
Between the vivid lips; a vassal set;
And numb, of formal value. Are we true
In nature, never natural thing repents;
Albeit receiving punishment for due,
Among the group of this world's penitents;
Albeit remorsefully regretting, oft
Cravenly, while the scourge no shudder spares.

Our world believes it stabler if the soft
Are whipped to show the face repentance wears.
Then hear it, in a moan of atheist gloom,
Deplore the weedy growth of hypocrites;
Count Nature devilish, and accept for doom
The chasm between our passions and our wits!

Affecting lunar whiteness, patent snows,
It trembles at betrayal of a sore.
Hers is the glacier-conscience, to expose
Impurities for clearness at the core.

She to her hungered thundering in breast,
Ye shall not starve, not feebly designates
The world repressing as a life repressed,
Judged by the wasted martyrs it creates.
How Sin, amid the shades Cimmerian,
Repents, she points for sight: and she avers,
The hoofed half-angel in the Puritan
Nigh reads her when no brutish wrath deters.

Sin against immaturity, the sin
Of ravenous excess, what deed divides
Man from vitality; these bleed within;
Bleed in the crippled relic that abides.
Perpetually they bleed; a limb is lost,
A piece of life, the very spirit maimed.
But culprit who the law of man has crossed
With Nature's, dubiously within is blamed;
Despite our cry at cutting of the whip,
Our shiver in the night when numbers frown:
We but bewail a broken fellowship,
A sting, an isolation, a fall'n crown.

Abject of sinners is that sensitive,
The flesh, amenable to stripes, miscalled
Incorrigible: such title do we give
To the poor shrinking stuff wherewith we are walled;
And taking it for Nature, place in ban
Our Mother, as a Power wanton-willed,
The shame and baffler of the soul of man,
The recreant, reptilious. Do thou build
Thy mind on her foundations in earth's bed;
Behold man's mind the child of her keen rod,
For teaching how the wits and passions wed
To rear that temple of the credible God;
Sacred the letters of her laws, and plain,
Will shine, to guide thy feet and hold thee firm:
Then, as a pathway through a field of grain,
Man's laws appear the blind progressive worm,
That moves by touch, and thrust of linking rings:
The which to endow with vision, lift from mud

To level of their nature's aims and springs,
Must those, the twain beside our vital flood,
Now on opposing banks, the twain at strife
(Whom the so rosy ferryman invites
To junction, and mid-channel over Life,
Unmasked to the ghostly, much asunder smites),
Instruct in deeper than Convenience,
In higher than the harvest of a year.
Only the rooted knowledge to high sense
Of heavenly can mount, and feel the spur
For fruitfullest advancement, eye a mark
Beyond the path with grain on either hand,
Help to the steering of our social Ark
Over the barbarous waters unto land.

For us the double conscience and its war,
The serving of two masters, false to both,
Until those twain, who spring the root and are
The knowledge in division, plight a troth
Of equal hands: nor longer circulate
A pious token for their current coin,
To growl at the exchange; they, mate and mate,
Fair feminine and masculine shall join
Upon an upper plane, still common mould,
Where stamped religion and reflective pace
A statelier measure, and the hoop of gold
Rounds to horizon for their soul's embrace.
Then shall those noblest of the earth and sun
Inmix unlike to waves on savage sea.
But not till Nature's laws and man's are one,
Can marriage of the man and woman be.

V

He passed her through the sermon's dull defile.
Down under billowy vapour-gorges heaved
The city and the vale and mountain-pile.
She felt strange push of shuttle-threads that weaved.

A new land in an old beneath her lay;
And forth to meet it did her spirit rush,
As bride who without shame has come to say,
Husband, in his dear face that caused her blush.

A natural woman's heart, not more than clad
By station and bright raiment, gathers heat
From nakedness in trusted hands: she had
The joy of those who feel the world's heart beat,
After long doubt of it as fire or ice;
Because one man had helped her to breathe free;
Surprised to faith in something of a price
Past the old charity in chivalry: —
Our first wild step to right the loaded scales
Displaying women shamefully outweighed.
The wisdom of humaneness best avails
For serving justice till that fraud is brayed.

Her buried body fed the life she drank.
And not another stripping of her wound!
The startled thought on black delirium sank,
While with her gentle surgeon she communed,

And woman's prospect of the yoke repelled.
Her buried body gave her flowers and food;
The peace, the homely skies, the springs that welled;
Love, the large love that folds the multitude.

Soul's chastity in honesty, and this
With beauty, made the dower to men refused.
And little do they know the prize they miss;
Which is their happy fortune! Thus he mused.

For him, the cynic in the Sage had play
A hazy moment, by a breath dispersed;
To think, of all alive most wedded they,
Whom time disjoined! He needed her quick thirst
For renovated earth: on earth she gazed,
With humble aim to foot beside the wise.
Lo, where the eyelashes of night are raised
Yet lowly over morning's pure grey eyes.

LOVE IS WINGED

Love is winged for two,
In the worst he weathers,
When their hearts are tied;
But if they divide,
O too true!
Cracks a globe, and feathers, feathers,
Feathers all the ground bestrew.

I was breast of morning sea,
Rosy plume on forest dun,
I the laugh in rainy fleeces,
While with me
She made one.
Now must we pick up our pieces,
For that then so winged were we.

ASK, IS LOVE DIVINE

Ask, is Love divine,
Voices all are, ay.
Question for the sign,
There 's a common sigh.
Would we through our years,
Love forego,
Quit of scars and tears ?
Ah, but no, no, no!

JOY IS FLEET

Joy is fleet,
Sorrow slow.
Love so sweet,
Sorrow will sow.
Love, that has flown
Ere day's decline,
Love to have known,
Sorrow, be mine!

THE LESSON OF GRIEF

Not ere the bitter herb we taste,
Which ages thought of happy times,
To plant us in a weeping waste,
Rings with our fellows this one heart
Accordant chimes.

When I had shed my glad year's leaf,
I did believe I stood alone,
Till that great company of Grief
Taught me to know this craving heart
For not my own.

THE WOODS OF WESTERMAIN

I

Enter these enchanted woods,
    You who dare.
Nothing harms beneath the leaves
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
    Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver, and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
    Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
    You who dare.

II

Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:
Yaffles on a chuckle skim
Low to laugh from branches dim:
Up the pine, where sits the star,
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.

Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
Then beware.
Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

III

Open hither, open hence,
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,
Where the strawberry runs red,
With white star-flower overhead;
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,
Mine of mole and spotted flint:
Of dire wizardry no hint,
Save mayhap the print that shows
Hasty outward-tripping toes,
Heels to terror, on the mould.
These, the woods of Westermain,
Are as others to behold,
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;
Foliage lustreful around
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,
Shelter eager minikins,
Myriads, free to peck and pipe:
Would you better? would you worse?

You with them may gather ripe
Pleasures flowing not from purse.
Quick and far as Colour flies
Taking the delighted eyes,
You of any well that springs
May unfold the heaven of things;
Have it homely and within,
And thereof its likeness win,
Will you so in soul's desire:
This do sages grant t' the lyre.
This is being bird and more,
More than glad musician this;
Granaries you will have a store
Past the world of woe and bliss;
Sharing still its bliss and woe;
Harnessed to its hungers, no.
On the throne Success usurps,
You shall seat the joy you feel
Where a race of water chirps,
Twisting hues of flourished steel:
Or where light is caught in hoop
Up a clearing's leafy rise,
Where the crossing deerherds troop
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
Speculation with the cud,
Read their pool of vision through,
Back to hours when mind was mud;
Nigh the knot, which did untwine
Timelessly to drowsy suns;
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,

Heaven a space for winging tons.
Farther, deeper, may you read,
Have you sight for things afield,
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed;
Showing a kind face and sweet:
Look you with the soul you see't.
Glory narrowing to grace,
Grace to glory magnified,
Following that will you embrace
Close in arms or aëry wide.
Banished is the white Foam-born
Not from here, nor under ban
Phoebus lyrist, Phoebe's horn,
Pipings of the reedy Pan.
Loved of Earth of old they were,
Loving did interpret her;
And the sterner worship bars
None whom Song has made her stars.
You have seen the huntress moon
Radiantly facing dawn,
Dusky meads between them strewn
Glimmering like downy awn:
Argent Westward glows the hunt,
East the blush about to climb;
One another fair they front,
Transient, yet outshine the time;
Even as dewlight off the rose
In the mind a jewel sows.
Thus opposing grandeurs live
Here if Beauty be their dower:

Doth she of her spirit give,
Fleetingness will spare her flower.
This is in the tune we play,
Which no spring of strength would quell;
In subduing does not slay;
Guides the channel, guards the well:
Tempered holds the young blood-heat,
Yet through measured grave accord,
Hears the heart of wildness beat
Like a centaur's hoof on sward.
Drink the sense the notes infuse,
You a larger self will find:
Sweetest fellowship ensues
With the creatures of your kind.
Ay, and Love, if Love it be
Flaming over *I* and *ME*,
Love meet they who do not shove
Cravings in the van of Love.
Courtly dames are here to woo,
Knowing love if it be true.
Reverence the blossom-shoot
Fervently, they are the fruit.
Mark them stepping, hear them talk,
Goddess, is no myth inane,
You will say of those who walk
In the woods of Westermain.
Waters that from throat and thigh
Dart the sun his arrows back;
Leaves that on a woodland sigh
Chat of secret things no lack;
Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear,

Bare or veiled they move sincere;
Not by slavish terrors tripped;
Being anew in nature dipped,
Growths of what they step on, these;
With the roots the grace of trees.
Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,
For a tyrant's flattered pride,
Mind, which nourished not by light,
Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite:
Whereof are strange tales to tell;
Some in blood writ, tombed in bell.
Here the ancient battle ends,
Joining two astonished friends,
Who the kiss can give and take
With more warmth than in that world
Where the tiger claws the snake,
Snake her tiger clasps infurled,
And the issue of their fight
Peoples lands in snarling plight.
Here her splendid beast she leads
Silken-leashed and decked with weeds
Wild as he, but breathing faint
Sweetness of unfelt constraint.
Love, the great volcano, flings
Fires of lower Earth to sky;
Love, the sole permitted, sings
Sovereignly of *ME* and *I*.
Bowers he has of sacred shade,
Spaces of superb parade,
Voiceful . . . But bring you a note
Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,

Discords out of discord spin
Round and round derisive din:
Sudden will a pallor pant
Chill at screeches miscreant;
Owls or spectres, thick they flee;
Nightmare upon horror broods;
Hooded laughter, monkish glee,
    Gaps the vital air.
Enter these enchanted woods
    You who dare.

IV

You must love the light so well
That no darkness will seem fell.
Love it so you could accost
Fellowly a livid ghost.
Whish! the phantom wisps away,
Owns him smoke to cocks of day.
In your breast the light must burn
Fed of you, like corn in quern
Ever plumping while the wheel
Speeds the mill and drains the meal.
Light to light sees little strange,
Only features heavenly new;
Then you touch the nerve of Change,
Then of Earth you have the clue;
Then her two-sexed meanings melt
Through you, wed the thought and felt.
Sameness locks no scurfy pond
Here for Custom, crazy-fond:

Change is on the wing to bud
Rose in brain from rose in blood.
Wisdom throbbing shall you see
Central in complexity;
From her pasture 'mid the beasts
Rise to her ethereal feasts,
Not, though lightnings track your wit
Starward, scorning them you quit:
For be sure the bravest wing
Preens it in our common spring,
Thence along the vault to soar,
You with others, gathering more,
Glad of more, till you reject
Your proud title of elect,
Perilous even here while few
Roam the arched greenwood with you.
Heed that snare.
Muffled by his cavern-cowl
Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,
Who was lord ere light you drank,
And lest blood of knightly rank
Stream, let not your fair princess
Stray: he holds the leagues in stress,
Watches keenly there.
Oft has he been riven; slain
Is no force in Westermain.
Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,
Put his fangs to uses, tame,
Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,
How to cure him sick and lame.
Much restricted, much enringed,

Much he frets, the hooked and winged,
Never known to spare.
'T is enough: the name of Sage
Hits no thing in nature, nought;
Man the least, save when grave Age
From yon Dragon guards his thought.
Eye him when you hearken dumb
To what words from Wisdom come.
When she says how few are by
Listening to her, eye his eye.
Self, his name declare.
Him shall Change, transforming late,
Wonderously renovate.
Hug himself the creature may:
What he hugs is loathed decay.
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough!
Change will strip his armour off;
Make of him who was all maw,
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,
Such a servant as none saw
Through his days of dragonhood.
Days when growling o'er his bone,
Sharpened he for mine and thine;
Sensitive within alone;
Scaly as in clefts of pine.
Change, the strongest son of Life,
Has the Spirit here to wife.
Lo, their young of vivid breed,
Bear the lights that onward speed,
Threading thickets, mounting glades,
Up the verdurous colonnades,

Round the fluttered curves, and down,
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,
Whither, in her central space,
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.
Fount unresting, Lure divine!
There meet all: too late look most.
Fire in water hued as wine,
Springs amid a shadowy host;
Circled: one close-headed mob,
Breathless, scanning divers heaps
Where a Heart begins to throb,
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps.
And 't is very strange, 't is said,
How you spy in each of them
Semblance of that Dragon red,
As the oak in bracken-stem.
And, 't is said, how each and each:
Which commences, which subsides:
First my Dragon! doth beseech
Her who food for all provides.
And she answers with no sign;
Utters neither yea nor nay;
Fires the water hued as wine;
Kneads another spark in clay.
Terror is about her hid;
Silence of the thunders locked;
Lightnings lining the shut lid;
Fixity on quaking rocked.
Lo, you look at Flow and Drought
Interflashed and interwrought:
Ended is begun, begun

Ended, quick as torrents run.
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;
Luridness and lustre link;
'T is your come and go of breath;
Mirrored pants the Life, the Death;
Each of either reaped and sown:
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.
See you so? your senses drift;
'T is a shuttle weaving swift.
Look with spirit past the sense,
Spirit shines in permanence.
That is She, the view of whom
Is the dust within the tomb,
Is the inner blush above,
Look to loathe, or look to love;
Think her Lump, or know her Flame;
Dread her scourge, or read her aim;
Shoot your hungers from their nerve;
Or, in her example, serve.
Some have found her sitting grave;
Laughing, some; or, browed with sweat,
Hurling dust of fool and knave
In a hissing smithy's jet.
More it were not well to speak;
Burn to see, you need but seek.
Once beheld she gives the key
Airing every doorway, she.
Little can you stop or steer
Ere of her you are the seër.
On the surface she will witch,
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze

Under, and the soul is rich
Past computing, past amaze.
Then is courage that endures
Even her awful tremble yours.
Then, the reflex of that Fount
Spied below, will Reason mount
Lordly and a quenchless force,
Lighting Pain to its mad source,
Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,
Shot through all its phantom shapes.
Then your spirit will perceive
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins;
Where the passions interweave,
How the serpent tangle spins
Of the sense of Earth misprised,
Brainlessly unrecognized;
She being Spirit in her clods,
Footway to the God of Gods.
Then for you are pleasures pure,
Sureties as the stars are sure:
Not the wanton beckoning flags
Which, of flattery and delight,
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags
Riding souls of men to night:
Pleasures that through blood run sane,
Quickening spirit from the brain.
Each of each in sequent birth,
Blood and brain and spirit, three
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth),
Join for true felicity.
Are they parted, then expect

Some one sailing will be wrecked:
Separate hunting are they sped,
Scan the morsel coveted.
Earth that Triad is: she hides
Joy from him who that divides;
Showers it when the three are one
Glassing her in union.
Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
You command a double realm:
Labouring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set;
Leaving her the future task:
Loving her too well to ask.
Eglantine that climbs the yew,
She her darkest wreathes for those
Knowing her the Ever-new,
And themselves the kin o' the rose.
Life, the chisel, axe and sword,
Wield who have her depths explored:
Life, the dream, shall be their robe,
Large as air about the globe;
Life, the question, hear its cry
Echoed with concordant Why;
Life, the small self-dragon ramped,
Thrill for service to be stamped.
Ay, and over every height
Life for them shall wave a wand:
That, the last, where sits affright,
Homely shows the stream beyond.
Love the light and be its lynx,
You will track her and attain;

Read her as no cruel Sphinx
In the woods of Westermain.
Daily fresh the woods are ranged;
Glooms which otherwhere appal,
Sounded: here, their worths exchanged,
Urban joins with pastoral:
Little lost, save what may drop
Husk-like, and the mind preserves.
Natural overgrowths they lop,
Yet from nature neither swerves,
Trained or savage: for this cause:
Of our Earth they ply the laws,
Have in Earth their feeding root,
Mind of man and bent of brute.
Hear that song; both wild and ruled.
Hear it: is it wail or mirth?
Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled?
None, and all: it springs of Earth.
O but hear it! 'tis the mind;
Mind that with deep Earth unites,
Round the solid trunk to wind
Rings of clasping parasites.
Music have you there to feed
Simplest and most soaring need.
Free to wind, and in desire
Winding, they to her attached
Feel the trunk a spring of fire,
And ascend to heights unmatched,
Whence the tidal world is viewed
As a sea of windy wheat,
Momently black, barren, rude;

Golden-brown, for harvest meet;
Dragon-reaped from folly-sown;
Bride-like to the sickle-blade:
Quick it varies, while the moan,
Moan of a sad creature strayed,
Chiefly is its voice. So flesh
Conjures tempest-flails to thresh
Good from worthless. Some clear lamps
Light it; more of dead marsh-damps.
Monster is it still, and blind,
Fit but to be led by Pain.
Glance we at the paths behind,
Fruitful sight has Westermain.
There we laboured, and in turn
Forward our blown lamps discern,
As you see on the dark deep
Far the loftier billows leap,
    Foam for beacon bear.
Hither, hither, if you will,
Drink instruction, or instil,
Run the woods like vernal sap,
Crying, hail to luminousness!
    But have care.
In yourself may lurk the trap:
On conditions they caress.
Here you meet the light invoked:
Here is never secret cloaked.
Doubt you with the monster's fry
All his orbit may exclude;
Are you of the stiff, the dry,
Cursing the not understood;

Grasp you with the monster's claws;
Govern with his truncheon-saws;
Hate, the shadow of a grain;
You are lost in Westermain:
Earthward swoops a vulture sun,
Nighted upon carrion:
Straightway venom winecups shout
Toasts to One whose eyes are out:
Flowers along the reeling floor
Drip henbane and hellebore:
Beauty, of her tresses shorn,
Shrieks as nature's maniac:
Hideousness on hoof and horn
Tumbles, yapping in her track:
Haggard Wisdom, stately once,
Leers fantastical and trips:
Allegory drums the sconce,
Impiousness nibblenips.
Imp that dances, imp that flits,
Imp o' the demon-growing girl,
Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits
Round you, and with them you whirl
Fast where pours the fountain-rout
Out of Him whose eyes are out:
Multitudes on multitudes,
Drenched in wallowing devilry:
And you ask where you may be,
    In what reek of a lair
Given to bones and ogre-broods:
    And they yell you Where.
Enter these enchanted woods,
    You who dare.

A BALLAD OF PAST MERIDIAN

I

Last night returning from my twilight walk
I met the grey mist Death, whose eyeless brow
Was bent on me, and from his hand of chalk
He reached me flowers as from a withered bough:
O Death, what bitter nosegays givest thou!

II

Death said, I gather, and pursued his way.
Another stood by me, a shape in stone,
Sword-hacked and iron-stained, with breasts of clay,
And metal veins that sometimes fiery shone:
O Life, how naked and how hard when known!

III

Life said, As thou hast carved me, such am I.
Then memory, like the nightjar on the pine,
And sightless hope, a woodlark in night sky,
Joined notes of Death and Life till night's decline;
Of Death, of Life, those inwound notes are mine.

THE DAY OF THE DAUGHTER OF HADES

I

He who has looked upon Earth
Deeper than flower and fruit,
Losing some hue of his mirth,
As the tree striking rock at the root,
Unto him shall the marvellous tale
Of Callistes more humanly come
With the touch on his breast than a hail
From the markets that hum.

II

Now the youth footed swift to the dawn.
'T was the season when wintertide,
In the higher rock-hollows updrawn,
Leaves meadows to bud, and he spied,
By light throwing shallow shade,
Between the beam and the gloom,
Sicilian Enna, whose Maid
Such aspect wears in her bloom
Underneath since the Charioteer
Of Darkness whirled her away,
On a reaped afternoon of the year,
Nigh the poppy-droop of Day.

O and naked of her, all dust,
The majestic Mother and Nurse,
Ringing cries to the God, the Just,
Curled the land with the blight of her curse:
Recollected of this glad isle
Still quaking. But now more fair,
And momently fraying the while
The veil of the shadows there,
Soft Enna that prostrate grief
Sang through, and revealed round the vines,
Bronze-orange, the crisp young leaf,
The wheat-blades tripping in lines,
A hue unillumined by sun
Of the flowers flooding grass as from founts:
All the penetrable dun
Of the morn ere she mounts.

III

Nor had saffron and sapphire and red
Waved aloft to their sisters below,
When gaped by the rock-channel head
Of the lake, black, a cave at one blow,
Reverberant over the plain:
A sound oft fearfully swung
For the coming of wrathful rain:
And forth, like the dragon-tongue
Of a fire beaten flat by the gale,
But more as the smoke to behold,
A chariot burst. Then a wail
Quivered high of the love that would fold

Bliss immeasurable, bigger than heart,
Though a God's: and the wheels were stayed,
And the team of the chariot swart
Reared in marble, the six, dismayed,
Like hoofs that by night plashing sea
Curve and ramp from the vast swan-wave:
For, lo, the Great Mother, She!
And Callistes gazed, he gave
His eyeballs up to the sight:
The embrace of the Twain, of whom
To men are their day, their night,
Mellow fruits and the shearing tomb:
Our Lady of the Sheaves
And the Lily of Hades, the Sweet
Of Enna: he saw through leaves
The Mother and Daughter meet.
They stood by the chariot-wheel,
Embraced, very tall, most like
Fellow poplars, wind-taken, that reel
Down their shivering columns and strike
Head to head, crossing throats: and apart,
For the feast of the look, they drew,
Which Darkness no longer could thwart;
And they broke together anew,
Exulting to tears, flower and bud.
But the mate of the Rayless was grave:
She smiled like Sleep on its flood,
That washes of all we crave:
Like the trance of eyes awake
And the spirit enshrouded, she cast
The wan underworld on the lake.
They were so, and they passed.

IV

He tells it, who knew the law
Upon mortals: he stood alive
Declaring that this he saw:
He could see, and survive.

V

Now the youth was not ware of the beams
With the grasses intertwined,
For each thing seen, as in dreams,
Came stepping to rear through his mind,
Till it struck his remembered prayer
To be witness of this which had flown
Like a smoke melted thinner than air,
That the vacancy doth disown.
And viewing a maiden, he thought
It might now be morn, and afar
Within him the memory wrought
Of a something that slipped from the car
When those, the august, moved by:
Perchance a scarf, and perchance
This maiden. She did not fly,
Nor started at his advance:
She looked, as when infinite thirst
Pants pausing to bless the springs,
Refreshed, unsated. Then first
He trembled with awe of the things

He had seen; and he did transfer,
Divining and doubting in turn,
His reverence unto her;
Nor asked what he crouched to learn:
The whence of her, whither, and why
Her presence there, and her name,
Her parentage: under which sky
Her birth, and how hither she came,
So young, a virgin, alone,
Unfriended, having no fear,
As Oreads have; no moan,
Like the lost upon earth; no tear;
Not a sign of the torch in the blood,
Though her stature had reached the height
When mantles a tender rud
In maids that of youths have sight,
If maids of our seed they be:
For he said: A glad vision art thou!
And she answered him: Thou to me!
As men utter a vow.

VI

Then said she, quick as the cries
Of the rainy cranes: Light! light!
And Helios rose in her eyes,
That were full as the dew-balls bright,
Reluctent to him as dews
Unshaded. Breathing, she sent
Her voice to the God of the Muse,
And along the vale it went,

Strange to hear: not thin, not shrill:
Sweet, but no young maid's throat:
The echo beyond the hill
Ran falling on half the note:
And under the shaken ground
Where the Hundred-headed groans
By the roots of great Ætna bound,
As of him were hollow tones
Of wondering roared: a tale
Repeated to sunless halls.
But now off the face of the vale
Shadows fled in a breath, and the walls
Of the lake's rock-head were gold,
And the breast of the lake, that swell
Of the crestless long wave rolled
To shore-bubble, pebble and shell.
A morning of radiant lids
O'er the dance of the earth opened wide:
The bees chose their flowers, the snub kids
Upon hindlegs went sportive, or plied,
Nosing, hard at the dugs to be filled:
There was milk, honey, music to make:
Up their branches the little birds billed:
Chirrup, drone, bleat and buzz ringed the lake.
O shining in sunlight, chief
After water and water's caress,
Was the young bronze-orange leaf,
That clung to the tree as a tress,
Shooting lucid tendrils to wed
With the vine-hook tree or pole,
Like Arachne launched out on her thread.

Then the maiden her dusky stole
In the span of the black-starred zone,
Gathered up for her footing fleet.
As one that had toil of her own
She followed the lines of wheat
Tripping straight through the field, green blades,
To the groves of olive grey,
Downy-grey, golden-tinged: and to glades
Where the pear-blossom thickens the spray
In a night, like the snow-packed storm:
Pear, apple, almond, plum:
Not wintry now: pushing, warm!
And she touched them with finger and thumb,
As the vine-hook closes: she smiled,
Recounting again and again,
Corn, wine, fruit, oil! like a child,
With the meaning known to men.
For hours in the track of the plough
And the pruning-knife she stepped,
And of how the seed works, and of how
Yields the soil, she seemed adept.
Then she murmured that name of the dearth,
The Beneficent, Hers, who bade
Our husbandmen sow for the birth
Of the grain making earth full glad.
She murmured that Other's: the dirge
Of life-light: for whose dark lap
Our locks are clipped on the verge
Of the realm where runs no sap.
She said: We have looked on both!
And her eyes had a wavering beam

Of various lights, like the froth
Of the storm-swollen ravine stream
In flame of the bolt. What links
Were these which had made him her friend?
He eyed her, as one who drinks,
And would drink to the end.

VII

Now the meadows with crocus besprent,
And the asphodel woodsides she left,
And the lake-slopes, the ravishing scent
Of narcissus, dark-sweet, for the cleft
That tutors the torrent-brook,
Delaying its forceful spleen
With many a wind and crook
Through rock to the broad ravine.
By the hyacinth-bells in the brakes,
And the shade-loved white windflower, half hid,
And the sun-loving lizards and snakes
On the cleft's barren ledges, that slid
Out of sight, smooth as waterdrops, all,
At a snap of twig or bark
In the track of the foreign foot-fall,
She climbed to the pineforest dark,
Overbrowing an emerald chine
Of the glass-billows. Thence, as a wreath,
Running poplar and cypress to pine,
The lake-banks are seen, and beneath,
Vineyard, village, groves, rivers, towers, farms,
The citadel watching the bay,

The bay with the town in its arms,
The town shining white as the spray
Of the sapphire sea-wave on the rock,
Where the rock stars the girdle of sea,
White-ringed, as the midday flock,
Clipped by heat, rings the round of the tree.
That hour of the piercing shaft
Transfixes bough-shadows, confused
In veins of fire, and she laughed,
With her quiet mouth amused,
To see the whole flock, adroop,
Asleep, hug the tree-stem as one,
Imperceptibly filling the loop
Of its shade at a slant of sun.
The pipes under pent of the crag,
Where the goatherds in piping recline,
Have whimsical stops, burst and flag
Uncorrected as outstretched swine:
For the fingers are slack and unsure,
And the wind issues querulous: — thorns
And snakes! — but she listened demure,
Comparing day's music with morn's.
Of the gentle spirit that slips
From the bark of the tree she discoursed,
And of her of the wells, whose lips
Are coolness enchanting, rock-sourced.
And much of the sacred loon,
The frolic, the Goatfoot God,
For stories of indolent noon
In the pineforest's odorous nod,
She questioned, not knowing: he can

Be waspish, irascible, rude,
He is oftener friendly to man,
And ever to beasts and their brood.
For the which did she love him well,
She said, and his pipes of the reed,
His twitched lips puffing to tell
In music his tears and his need,
Against the sharp catch of his hurt.
Not as shepherds of Pan did she speak,
Nor spake as the schools, to divert,
But fondly, perceiving him weak
Before Gods, and to shepherds a fear,
A holiness, horn and heel.
All this she had learnt in her ear
From Callistes, and taught him to feel.
Yea, the solemn divinity flushed
Through the shaggy brown skin of the beast,
And the steeps where the cataract rushed,
And the wilds where the forest is priest,
Were his temple to clothe him in awe,
While she spake: 't was a wonder: she read
The haunts of the beak and the claw
As plain as the land of bread,
But Cities and martial States,
Whither soon the youth veered his theme,
Were impervious barrier-gates
To her: and that ship, a trireme,
Nearing harbour, scarce wakened her glance,
Though he dwelt on the message it bore
Of sceptre and sword and lance
To the bee-swarms black on the shore,

Which were audible almost,
So black they were. It befell
That he called up the warrior host
Of the Song pouring hydromel
In thunder, the wide-winged Song.
And he named with his boyish pride
The heroes, the noble throng
Past Acheron now, foul tide!
With his joy of the godlike band
And the verse divine, he named
The chiefs pressing hot on the strand,
Seen of Gods, of Gods aided, and maimed.
The fleetfoot and ireful; the King;
Him, the prompter in stratagem,
Many-shifted and masterful: Sing,
O Muse! But she cried: Not of them!
She breathed as if breath had failed,
And her eyes, while she bade him desist,
Held the lost-to-light ghosts grey-mailed,
As you see the grey river-mist
Hold shapes on the yonder bank.
A moment her body waned,
The light of her sprang and sank:
Then she looked at the sun, she regained
Clear feature, and she breathed deep.
She wore the wan smile he had seen,
As the flow of the river of Sleep,
On the mouth of the Shadow-Queen.
In sunlight she craved to bask,
Saying: Life! And who was she? who?
Of what issue? He dared not ask,
For that partly he knew.

VIII

A noise of the hollow ground
Turned the eye to the ear in debate:
Not the soft overflowing of sound
Of the pines, ranked, lofty, straight,
Barely swayed to some whispers remote,
Some swarming whispers above:
Not the pines with the faint airs afloat,
Hush-hushing the nested dove:
It was not the pines, or the rout
Oft heard from mid-forest in chase,
But the long muffled roar of a shout
Subterranean. Sharp grew her face.
She rose, yet not moved by affright;
'T was rather good haste to use
Her holiday of delight
In the beams of the God of the Muse.
And the steeps of the forest she crossed,
On its dry red sheddings and cones
Up the paths by roots green-mossed,
Spotted amber, and old mossed stones.
Then out where the brook-torrent starts
To her leap, and from bend to curve
A hurrying elbow darts
For the instant-glancing swerve,
Decisive, with violent will
In the action formed, like hers,
The maiden's, ascending; and still
Ascending, the bud of the furze,
The broom, and all blue-berried shoots

Of stubborn and prickly kind,
The juniper flat on its roots,
The dwarf rhododaphne, behind
She left, and the mountain sheep
Far behind, goat, herbage and flower.
The island was hers, and the deep,
All heaven, a golden hour.
Then with wonderful voice that rang
Through air as the swan's nigh death,
Of the glory of Light she sang,
She sang of the rapture of Breath.
Nor ever, says he who heard,
Heard Earth in her boundaries broad,
From bosom of singer or bird
A sweetness thus rich of the God
Whose harmonies always are sane.
She sang of furrow and seed,
The burial, birth of the grain,
The growth, and the showers that feed,
And the green blades waxing mature
For the husbandman's armful brown.
O, the song in its burden ran pure,
And burden to song was a crown.
Callistes, a singer, skilled
In the gift he could measure and praise,
By a rival's art was thrilled,
Though she sang but a Song of Days,
Where the husbandman's toil and strife
Little varies to strife and toil:
But the milky kernel of life,
With her numbered: corn, wine, fruit, oil!

The song did give him to eat:
Gave the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet:
The grace of the battle for food,
With the issue Earth cannot refuse
When men to their labour are sworn.
'T was a song of the God of the Muse
To the forehead of Morn.

IX

Him loved she. Lo, now was he veiled:
Over sea stood a swelled cloud-rack:
The fishing-boat havenward sailed,
Bent abeam with a whitened track,
Surprised, fast hauling the net,
As it flew: sea dashed, earth shook.
She said: Is it night? O not yet!
With a travail of thoughts in her look.
The mountain heaved up to its peak:
Sea darkened: earth gathered her fowl:
Of bird or of branch rose the shriek.
Night? but never so fell a scowl
Wore night, nor the sky since then
When ocean ran swallowing shore,
And the Gods looked down for men.
Broke tempest with that stern roar
Never yet, save when black on the whirl
Rode wrath of a sovereign Power.
Then the youth and the shuddering girl,
Dim as shades in the angry shower,

Joined hands and descended a maze
Of the paths that were racing alive
Round boulder and bush, cleaving ways,
Incessant, with sound of a hive.
The height was a fountain-urn
Pouring streams, and the whole solid height
Leaped, chasing at every turn
The pair in one spirit of flight
To the folding pineforest. Yet here,
Like the pause to things hunted, in doubt,
The stillness bred spectral fear
Of the awfulness ranging without,
And imminent. Downward they fled,
From under the haunted roof,
To the valley aquake with the tread
Of an iron-resounding hoof,
As of legions of thunderful horse
Broken loose and in line tramping hard.
For the rage of a hungry force
Roamed blind of its mark over sward:
They saw it rush dense in the cloak
Of its travelling swathe of steam,
All the vale through a thin thread-smoke
Was thrown back to distance extreme:
And dull the full breast of it blinked,
Like a buckler of steel breathed o'er,
Diminished, in strangeness distinct,
Glowing cold, unearthly, hoar:
An Enna of fields beyond sun,
Out of light, in a lurid web,
And the traversing fury spun

Up and down with a wave's flow and ebb;
As the wave breaks to grasp and to spurn,
Retire, and in ravenous greed,
Inveterate, swell its return.
Up and down, as if wringing from speed
Sights that made the unsighted appear,
Delude and dissolve, on it scoured.
Lo, a sea upon land held career
Through the plain of the vale half-devoured.
Callistes of home and escape
Muttered swiftly, unwitting of speech.
She gazed at the Void of shape,
She put her white hand to his reach,
Saying: Now have we looked on the Three.
And divided from day, from night,
From air that is breath, stood she,
Like the vale, out of light.

X

Then again in disorderly words
He muttered of home, and was mute,
With the heart of the cowering birds
Ere they burst off the fowler's foot.
He gave her some redness that streamed
Through her limbs in a flitting glow.
The sigh of our life she seemed,
The bliss of it clothing in woe.
Frailer than flower when the round
Of the sickle encircles it: strong
To tell of the things profound,

Our inmost uttering song,
Unspoken. So stood she awhile
In the gloom of the terror afield,
And the silence about her smile
Said more than of tongue is revealed.
I have breathed: I have gazed: I have been:
It said: and not joylessly shone
The remembrance of light through the screen
Of a face that seemed shadow and stone.
She led the youth trembling, appalled,
To the lake-banks he saw sink and rise
Like a panic-struck breast. Then she called,
And the hurricane blackness had eyes.
It launched like the Thunderer's bolt.
Pale she drooped, and the youth by her side
Would have clasped her and dared a revolt
Sacrilegious as ever defied
High Olympus, but vainly for strength
His compassionate heart shook a frame
Stricken rigid to ice all its length.
On amain the black traveller came.
Lo, a chariot, cleaving the storm,
Clove the fountaining lake with a plough,
And the lord of the steeds was in form
He, the God of implacable brow,
Darkness: he: he in person: he raged
Through the wave like a boar of the wilds
From the hunters and hounds disengaged,
And a name shouted hoarsely: his child's.
Horror melted in anguish to hear.
Lo, the wave hissed apart for the path

Of the terrible Charioteer,
With the foam and torn features of wrath,
Hurled aloft on each arm in a sheet;
And the steeds clove it, rushing at land
Like the teeth of the famished at meat.
Then he swept out his hand.

XI

This, no more, doth Callistes recall:
He saw, ere he dropped in swoon,
On the maiden the chariot fall,
As a thundercloud swings on the moon.
Forth, free of the deluge, one cry
From the vanishing gallop rose clear:
And: Skiágeneia! the sky
Rang: Skiágeneia! the sphere.
And she left him therewith, to rejoice,
Repine, yearn, and know not his aim,
The life of their day in her voice,
Left her life in her name.

XII

Now the valley in ruin of fields
And fair meadowland, showing at eve
Like the spear-pitted warrior's shields
After battle, bade men believe
That no other than wrathfullest God
Had been loose on her beautiful breast,

Where the flowery grass was clod,
Wheat and vine as a trailing nest.
The valley, discreet in grief,
Disclosed but the open truth,
And Enna had hope of the sheaf:
There was none for the desolate youth
Devoted to mourn and to crave.
Of the secret he had divined
Of his friend of a day would he rave:
How for light of our earth she pined:
For the olive, the vine and the wheat,
Burning through with inherited fire:
And when Mother went Mother to meet,
She was prompted by simple desire
In the day-destined car to have place
At the skirts of the Goddess, unseen,
And be drawn to the dear earth's face.
She was fire for the blue and the green
Of our earth, dark fire; athirst
As a seed of her bosom for dawn,
White air that had robed and nursed
Her mother. Now was she gone
With the Silent, the God without tear,
Like a bud peeping out of its sheath
To be sundered and stamped with the sere.
And Callistes to her beneath,
As she to our beams, extinct,
Strained arms: he was shade of her shade.
In division so were they linked.
But the song which had betrayed
Her flight to the cavernous ear

For its own keenly wakeful: that song
Of the sowing and reaping, and cheer
Of the husbandman's heart made strong
Through droughts and deluging rains
With his faith in the Great Mother's love:
O the joy of the breath she sustains,
And the lyre of the light above,
And the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet:
That song the youth ever pursued
In the track of her footing fleet.
For men to be profited much
By her day upon earth did he sing:
Of her voice, and her steps, and her touch
On the blossoms of tender Spring,
Immortal: and how in her soul
She is with them, and tearless abides,
Folding grain of a love for one goal
In patience, past flowing of tides.
And if unto him she was tears,
He wept not: he wasted within:
Seeming sane in the song, to his peers,
Only crazed where the cravings begin.
Our Lady of Gifts prized he less
Than her issue in darkness: the dim
Lost Skiágeneia's caress
Of our earth made it richest for him.
And for that was a curse on him raised,
And he withered rathe, dry to his prime,
Though the bounteous Giver be praised
Through the island with rites of old time

Exceedingly fervent, and reaped
Veneration for teachings devout,
Pious hymns when the corn-sheaves are heaped,
And the wine-presses ruddily spout,
And the olive and apple are juice
At a touch light as hers lost below.
Whatsoever to men is of use
Sprang his worship of them who bestow,
In a measure of songs unexcelled:
But that soul loving earth and the sun
From her home of the shadows he held
For his beacon where beam there is none:
And to join her, or have her brought back,
In his frenzy the singer would call,
Till he followed where never was track,
On the path trod of all.

THE LARK ASCENDING

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls ;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changeingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardour, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,

Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward
That trembling into fulness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine;
Such wooing as the ear receives
From zephyr caught in choric leaves
Of aspens when their chattering net
Is flushed to white with shivers wet;
And such the water-spirit's chime
On mountain heights in morning's prime,
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
Too animate to need a stress;
But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads,
Awakening, as it waxes thin,

The best in us to him akin;
And every face to watch him raised,
Puts on the light of children praised,
So rich our human pleasure ripes
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
Though nought be promised from the seas,
But only a soft-ruffling breeze
Sweep glittering on a still content,
Serenity in ravishment.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'T is love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes:
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labour in the town;
He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
The wedding song of sun and rains
He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe;
All these the circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,
The better heart of men shall see,
Shall feel celestially, as long
As you crave nothing save the song.

o

Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,
Now names, and men still housing here,
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
For song our highest heaven to greet:
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
From firmest base to farthest leap,
Because their love of Earth is deep,
And they are warriors in accord
With life to serve, and pass reward,
So touching purest and so heard
In the brain's reflex of yon bird:

Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

PHOEBUS WITH ADMETUS

I

When by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,
Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God,
Mindful were the ploughmen of who the steer had yoked,
Who: and what a track showed the upturned sod!
Mindful were the shepherds as now the noon severe
Bent a burning eyebrow to brown evetide,
How the rustic flute drew the silver to the sphere,
Sister of his own, till her rays fell wide.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

II

Chirping none the scarlet cicalas crouched in ranks:
Slack the thistle-head piled its down-silk grey:
Scaree the stony lizard sucked hollows in his flanks:
Thick on spots of umbrage our drowsed flocks lay.

Sudden bowed the chestnuts beneath a wind unheard,
Lengthened ran the grasses, the sky grew slate:
Then amid a swift flight of winged seed white as curd,
Clear of limb a Youth smote the master's gate.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

III

Water, first of singers, o'er rocky mount and mead,
First of earthly singers, the sun-loved rill,
Sang of him, and flooded the ripples on the reed,
Seeking whom to waken and what ear fill.
Water, sweetest soother to kiss a wound and cool,
Sweetest and divinest, the sky-born brook,
Chuckled, with a whimper, and made a mirror-pool
Round the guest we welcomed, the strange hand shook.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

IV

Many swarms of wild bees descended on our fields:
Stately stood the wheatstalk with head bent high:
Big of heart we laboured at storing mighty yields,
Wool and corn, and clusters to make men cry!

Hand-like rushed the vintage; we strung the bellied skins
Plump, and at the sealing the Youth's voice rose:
Maidens clung in circle, on little fists their chins;
Gentle beasties through pushed a cold long nose.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

V

Foot to fire in snowtime we trimmed the slender shaft:
Often down the pit spied the lean wolf's teeth
Grin against his will, trapped by masterstrokes of craft;
Helpless in his froth-wrath as green logs seethe!
Safe the tender lambs tugged the teats, and winter sped
Whirled before the crocus, the year's new gold.
Hung the hooky beak up aloft the arrowhead
Reddened through his feathers for our dear fold.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VI

Tales we drank of giants at war with Gods above:
Rocks were they to look on, and earth climbed air!
Tales of search for simples, and those who sought of love
Ease because the creature was all too fair.

Pleasant ran our thinking that while our work was good,
Sure as fruits for sweat would the praise come fast.
He that wrestled stoutest and tamed the billow-brood
Danced in rings with girls, like a sail-flapped mast.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VII

Lo, the herb of healing, when once the herb is known,
Shines in shady woods bright as new-sprung flame.
Ere the string was tightened we heard the mellow tone,
After he had taught how the sweet sounds came.
Stretched about his feet, labour done, 't was as you see
Red pomegranates tumble and burst hard rind.
So began contention to give delight and be
Excellent in things aimed to make life kind.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VIII

You with shelly horns, rams! and, promontory goats,
You whose browsing beards dip in coldest dew!
Bulls, that walk the pastures in kingly-flashing coats!
Laurel, ivy, vine, wreathed for feasts not few!

You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
  You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent:
He has been our fellow, the morning of our days;
  Us he chose for housemates, and this way went.
    God! of whom music
    And song and blood are pure,
    The day is never darkened
    That had thee here obscure.

MELAMPUS

I

With love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;
The good physician Melampus, loving them all,
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

II

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we
To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours:
And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined
Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows
In them, in us, from the source by man unattained
Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

III

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast
Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,
The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best
Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape:
For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,
As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:
They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,
And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

IV

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,
Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain
Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods
Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane
The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limns
To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life
Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns
Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

V

Now sleeping once on a day of marvellous fire,
A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret
That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,
Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set
Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue
Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears
A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,
He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!

VI

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech
Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves
To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach;
He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.
No fears have I of a man who goes with his head
To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:
I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;
I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

VII

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist:
He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.
Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,
He spied the birds and the bill of the speaking bird.
His cushion mosses in shades of various green,
The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake
Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,
It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

VIII

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,
As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,
Ere yet they dart in a brook are one bubble-pool
To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.

The soul of light vivid shone, a stream within stream;
The soul of sound from a musical shell outflew;
Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,
The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

IX

He knew the Hours: they were round him, laden with seed
Of hours bestrewn upon vapour, and one by one
They winged as ripened in fruit the burden decreed
For each to scatter; they flushed like the buds in sun,
Bequeathing seed to successive similar rings,
Their sisters, bearers to men of what men have earned:
He knew them, talked with the yet unreddened; the stings,
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms divined, discerned.

X

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,
By riddling fingers expanded, oft watched in growth
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's quickening wheat,
Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the plants of sloth,
The plants of rigidness, answered question and squeeze,
Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninviting, bent,
Yet making harmony breathe of life and disease,
The deeper chord of a wonderful instrument.

XI

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and the fates
We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears were charged
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,
With music wrought of distraction his heart enlarged.
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer, though mute,
He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-root
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled.

XII

Him Phoebus, lending to darkness colour and form
Of light's excess, many lessons and counsels gave;
Showed Wisdom lord of the human intricate swarm,
And whence prophetic it looks on the hives that rave,
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to acquire,
And where it stands, in the centre of life a sphere;
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the rapturous lyre,
He said was Wisdom, and struck him the notes to hear.

XIII

Sweet, sweet: 't was glory of vision, honey, the breeze
In heat, the run of the river on root and stone,
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine, his own.

In stately order, evolved of sound into sight,
From sight to sound intershifting, the man descried
The growths of earth, his adored, like day out of night,
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song allied.

XIV

And there vitality, there, there solely in song,
Resides, where earth and her uses to men, their needs,
Their forceful cravings, the theme are: there is it strong,
The Master said: and the studious eye that reads,
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods on the mount),
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is bound.
Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a fount
To spring perennial; well-spring is common ground.

XV

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and sage,
He served them, loving them, healing them; sick or maimed
Or them that frenzied in some delirious rage
Outran the measure, his juice of the woods reclaimed.
He played on men, as his master, Phoebus, on strings
Melodious: as the God did he drive and check,
Through love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,
  Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
  Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,
  Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:
  Then would she hold me and never let me go?

. . . . . .

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
  Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
  Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
  Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
  Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
  Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
  More love should I have, and much less care.

When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
  Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
  I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

. . . . . .

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows
  Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
  Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.
Deals she an unkindness, 't is but her rapid measure,
  Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
  Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
  Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
  Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
  So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
  Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

. . . . . .

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
  Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
  Brave is her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.

Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with colour, like yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

. . . . . .

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.

When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

. . . . . .

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,
Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odours and for colour,
Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

. . . . . .

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,
Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy rain:
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.

Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:
She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones:
O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honied field-rose,
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,
You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

. . . . . .

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.
Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf;
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.

Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;
  Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,
  Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

. . . . . .

This I may know: her dressing and undressing
  Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport
Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder
  Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port
White sails furl; or on the ocean borders
  White sails lean along the waves leaping green.
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight
  Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse
  Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,
  Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
  Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:
  Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

. . . . . .

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy
  Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from
    school,
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;
  O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!

Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tiptoe,
Said, 'I will kiss you': she laughed and leaned her cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

. . . . . .

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!
O the treasure-tresses one another over
Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet
Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,
Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.

Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree
  Gazes in this whiteness: nightlong could I.
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
  Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

. . . . . .

Gossips count her faults; they scour a narrow chamber
  Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.
'When she was a tiny,' one aged woman quavers,
  Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.
Faults she had once as she learnt to run and tumbled:
  Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy
  Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,
  Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;
  Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,
  Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames. —
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,
  Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

. . . . . .

Soon will she lie like a white frost sunrise.
  Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,
  Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.

Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring!
Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the skyfields,
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:
Fair as in image my seraph love appears
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids:
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.

. . . . . .

Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,
I would speak my heart out: heaven is my need.
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dogwood,
Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.
Flushing like the dogwood crimson in October;
Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown;
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted whitebeam:
All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

THE THREE SINGERS TO YOUNG BLOOD

Carols nature, counsel men.
Different notes as rook from wren,
Hear we when our steps begin,
And the choice is cast within,
Where a robber raven's tale
Urges passion's nightingale.

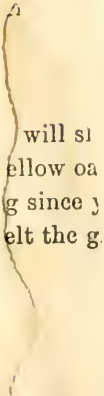
Hark to the three. Chimed they in one,
Life were music of the sun.
Liquid first, and then the caw,
Then the cry that knows not law.

I

As the birds do, so do we,
Bill our mate, and choose our tree.
Swift to building work addressed,
Any straw will help a nest.
Mates are warm, and this is truth,
Glad the young that come of youth.
They have bloom i' the blood and sap
Chilling at no thunder-clap.
Man and woman on the thorn,
Trust not Earth, and have her scorn.
They who in her lead confide,
Wither me if they spread not wide!
Look for aid to little things,
You will get them quick as wings,
Thick as feathers; would you feed,
Take the leap that springs the need.

II

Contemplate the rutted road:
Life is both a lure and goad.
Each to hold in measure just,
Trample appetite to dust.
Mark the fool and wanton spin:
Keep to harness as a skin.
Ere you follow nature's lead,
Of her powers in you have heed;
Else a shiverer you will find
You have challenged humankind.
Mates are chosen marketwise:
Coolest bargainer best buys.
Leap not, nor let leap the heart:
Trot your track, and drag your cart.
So your end may be in wool,
Honoured, and with manger full.



III

O the rosy light! it fleets,
Dearer dying than all sweets.
That is life: it waves and goes;
Solely in that cherished Rose
Palpitates, or else 't is death.
Call it love with all thy breath.
Love! it lingers: Love! it nears:
Love! O Love! the Rose appears,
Blushful, magic, reddening air.
Now the choice is on thee: dare!
Mortal seems the touch, but makes
Immortal the hand that takes.
Feel what sea within thee shames
Of its force all other claims,
Drowns them. Clasp! the world will be
Heavenly Rose to swelling sea.

THE ORCHARD AND THE HEATH

I CHANCED upon an early walk to spy
A troop of children through an orchard gate:
The boughs hung low, the grass was high;
They had but to lift hands or wait
For fruits to fill them; fruits were all their sky.

They shouted, running on from tree to tree,
And played the game the wind plays, on and round.
'T was visible invisible glee
Pursuing; and a fountain's sound
Of laughter spouted, pattering fresh on me.

I could have watched them till the daylight fled,
Their pretty bower made such a light of day.
A small one tumbling sang, 'Oh! head!'
The rest to comfort her straightway
Seized on a branch and thumped down apples red

The tiny creature flashing through green grass,
And laughing with her feet and eyes among
Fresh apples, while a little lass
Over as o'er breeze-ripples hung:
That sight I saw, and passed as aliens pass.

My footpath left the pleasant farms and lanes,
Soft cottage-smoke, straight cocks a-crow, gay flowers;
Beyond the wheel-ruts of the wains,
Across a heath I walked for hours,
And met its rival tenants, rays and rains.

Still in my view mile-distant firs appeared,
When, under a patched channel-bank enriched
With foxglove whose late bells drooped seared,
Behold, a family had pitched
Their camp, and labouring the low tent upreared.

Here, too, were many children, quick to scan
A new thing coming; swarthy cheeks, white teeth:
In many-coloured rags they ran,
Like iron runlets of the heath.
Dispersed lay broth-pot, sticks, and drinking-can.

Three girls, with shoulders like a boat at sea
Tipped sideways by the wave (their clothing slid
From either ridge unequally),
Lean, swift and voluble, bestrid
A starting-point, unfrocked to the bent knee.

They raced; their brothers yelled them on, and broke
In act to follow, but as one they snuffed
Wood-fumes, and by the fire that spoke
Of provender, its pale flame puffed,
And rolled athwart dwarf furzes grey-blue smoke.

Soon on the dark edge of a ruddier gleam,
The mother-pot perusing, all, stretched flat,
Paused for its bubbling-up supreme:
A dog upright in circle sat,
And oft his nose went with the flying steam.

I turned and looked on heaven awhile, where now
The moor-faced sunset broaden'd with red light;
Threw high aloft a golden bough,
And seemed the desert of the night
Far down with mellow orchards to endow.

EARTH AND MAN

I

On her great venture, Man,
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.

II

More aid than that embrace,
That nourishment, she cannot give: his heart
Involves his fate; and she who urged the start
Abides the race.

III

For he is in the lists
Contentious with the elements, whose dower
First sprang him; for swift vultures to devour
If he desists.

IV

His breath of instant thirst
Is warning of a creature matched with strife,
To meet it as a bride, or let fall life
On life's accursed.

V

No longer forth he bounds
The lusty animal, afield to roam,
But peering in Earth's entrails, where the gnome
Strange themes propounds.

VI

By hunger sharply sped
To grasp at weapons ere he learns their use,
In each new ring he bears a giant's thews,
An infant's head.

VII

And ever that old task
Of reading what he is and whence he came,
Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame
Across her mask.

VIII

He hears his wailful prayer,
When now to the Invisible he raves
To rend him from her, now his mother craves
Her calm, her care.

IX

The thing that shudders most
Within him is the burden of his cry.
Seen of his dread, she is to his blank eye
The eyeless Ghost.

X

Or sometimes she will seem
Heavenly, but her blush, soon wearing white,
Veils like a gorsebush in a web of blight,
With gold-buds dim.

XI

Once worshipped Prime of Powers,
She still was the Implacable: as a beast,
She struck him down and dragged him from the feast
She crowned with flowers.

XII

Her pomp of glorious hues,
Her revelries of ripeness, her kind smile,
Her songs, her peeping faces, lure awhile
With symbol-clues.

XIII

The mystery she holds
For him, inveterately he strains to see,
And sight of his obtuseness is the key
Among those folds.

XIV

He may entreat, aspire,
He may despair, and she has never heed.
She drinking his warm sweat will soothe his need,
Not his desire.

XV

She prompts him to rejoice,
Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud.
He deems her cherishing of her best-endowed
A wanton's choice.

XVI

Albeit thereof he has found
Firm roadway between lustfulness and pain;
Has half transferred the battle to his brain,
From bloody ground;

XVII

He will not read her good,
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,
Through that dense hood:

XVIII

Through terror, through distrust;
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live:
Through all that makes of him a sensitive
Abhorring dust.

XIX

The thid his wormy home!
Within ie the wind-whipped, anywhither wave
Seen of y tumbled on a shingle-grave
T e waste in foam.

XX

Therefore the wretch inclines
Afresh to the Invisible, who, he saith,
Can raise him high: with vows of living faith
For little signs.

XXI

Some signs he must demand,
Some proofs of slaughtered nature; some prized few,
To satisfy the senses it is true,
And in his hand,

XXII

This miracle which saves
Himself, himself doth from extinction snatch,
By virtue of his worth, contrasting much
With brutes and knaves.

XXIII

From dust, of him abhorred,
He would be snatched by Grace discovering worth.
'Sever me from the hollowness of earth!
Me take, dear Lord!'

XXIV

She hears him. Him she owes
For half her loveliness a love well won
By work that lights the shapeless and the dull need,
Their common foes.

XXV

He builds the soaring spires,
That sing his soul in stone: of her he draws,
Though blind to her, by spelling at her laws,
Her purest fires.

XXVI

Through him hath she exchanged,
For the gold harvest-robes, the mural crown,
Her haggard quarry-features and thick frown
Where monsters ranged.

XXVII

And order, high discourse,
And decency, than which is life less dear,
She has of him: the lyre of language clear,
Love's tongue and source.

XXVIII

She hears him, and can hear
With glory in his gains by work achieved:
With grief for grief that is the unperceived
Was her so near.

XXIX

When aloft for aid
Wheeling storms, her essence is the spur.
All his cry to heaven is a cry to her
He would evade.

XXX

Not elsewhere can he tend.
Those are her rules which bid him wash foul sins;
Those her revulsions from the skull that grins
To ape his end.

XXXI

And her desires are those
For happiness, for lastingness, for light.
'T is she who kindles in his haunting night
The hoped dawn-rose.

XXXII

Fair fountains of the dark
Daily she waves him, that his inner dream
May clasp amid the glooms a springing beam,
A quivering lark:

XXXIII

This life and her to know
For Spirit: with awakenedness of glee
To feel stern joy her origin: not he
The child of woe.

XXXIV

But that the senses still
Usurp the station of their issue mind,
He would have burst the chrysalis of the blind
As yet he will;

XXXV

As yet he will, she prays,
Yet will when his distempered devil of Self;—
The glutton for her fruits, the wily elf
In shifting rays;—

XXXVI

That captain of the scorned;
The coveter of life in soul and shell,
The fratricide, the thief, the infidel,
The hoofed and horned;—

XXXVII

He singularly doomed
To what he execrates and writhes to shun;—
When fire has passed him vapour to the sun,
And sun relumed,

XXXVIII

Then shall the horrid pall
Be lifted, and a spirit nigh divine,
'Live in thy offspring as I live in mine,'
Will hear her call.

XXXIX

Whence looks he on a land
Whereon his labour is a carven page;
And forth from heritage to heritage
Nought writ on sand.

XL

His fables of the Above,
And his gapped readings of the crown and sword,
The hell detested and the heaven adored,
The hate, the love,

XLI

The bright wing, the black hoof,
He shall peruse, from Reason not disjoined,
And never unfaith clamouring to be coined
To faith by proof.

XLII

She her just Lord may view,
Not he, her creature, till his soul has yearned
With all her gifts to reach the light discerned
Her spirit through.

XLIII

Then in him time shall run
As in the hour that to young sunlight crows;
And — 'if thou hast good faith it can repose,'
She tells her son.

XLIV

Meanwhile on him, her chief
Expression, her great word of life, looks she;
Twi-minded of him, as the waxing tree,
Or dated leaf.

A BALLAD OF FAIR LADIES IN REVOLT

I

See the sweet women, friend, that lean beneath
The ever-falling fountain of green leaves
Round the white bending stem, and like a wreath
Of our most blushful flower shine trembling through,
To teach philosophers the thirst of thieves:
Is one for me? is one for you?

II

—Fair sirs, we give you welcome, yield you place,
And you shall choose among us which you will,
Without the idle pastime of the chase,
If to this treaty you can well agree:
To wed our cause, and its hi[illegible]ask fulfil.
He who's for us, for him are we!

III

—Most gracious ladies, nigh when light has birth,
A troop of maids, brown as burnt heather-bells,
And rich with life as moss-roots breathe of earth
In the first plucking of them, past us flew
To labour, singing rustic ritornells:
Had they a cause? are they of you?

IV

— Sirs, they are as unthinking armies are
To thoughtful leaders, and our cause is theirs.
When they know men they know the state of war:
But now they dream like sunlight on a sea,
And deem you hold the half of happy pairs.
He who's for us, for him are we!

V

— Ladies, I listened to a ring of dames;
Judicial in the robe and wig; secure
As venerated portraits in their frames;
And they denounced some insurrection new
Against sound laws which keep you good and pure.
Are you of them? are they of you?

VI

— Sirs, they are of us, as their dress denotes,
And by as much: let them together chime:
It is an ancient bell within their throats,
Pulled by an aged ringer; with what glee
Befits the yellow yesterdays of time.
He who's for us, for him are we!

VII

— Sweet ladies, you with beauty, you with wit;
Dowered of all favours and all blessed things
Whereat the ruddy torch of Love is lit;
Wherefore this vain and outworn strife renew,
Which stays the tide no more than eddy-rings?
Who is for love must be for you.

VIII

— The manners of the market, honest sirs,
'T is hard to quit when you behold the wares.
You flatter us, or perchance our milliners
You flatter; so this vain and outworn She
May still be the charmed snake to your soft airs!
A higher lord than Love claim we.

IX

— One day, dear lady, missing the broad track,
I came on a wood's border, by a mead,
Where golden May ran up to moted black:
And there I saw Queen Beauty hold review,
With Love before her throne in act to plead.
Take him for me, take her for you.

X

— Ingenious gentleman, the tale is known.
Love pleaded sweetly: Beauty would not melt:
She would not melt: he turned in wrath: her throne
The shadow of his back froze witheringly,
And sobbing at his feet Queen Beauty knelt.
O not such slaves of Love are we!

XI

— Love, lady, like the star above that lance
Of radiance flung by sunset on ridged cloud,
Sad as the last line of a brave romance! —
Young Love hung dim, yet quivering round him threw
Beams of fresh fire while Beauty waned and bowed.
Scorn Love, and dread the doom for you.

XII

— Called she not for her mirror, sir? Forth ran
Her women: I am lost, she cried, when lo,
Love in the form of an admiring man
Once more in adoration bent the knee
And brought the faded Pagan to full blow:
For which her throne she gave: not w[illegible]

XIII

— My version, madam, runs not to that end.
A certain madness of an hour half past,
Caught her like fever: her just lord no friend
She fancied; aimed beyond beauty, and thence grew
The prim acerbity, sweet Love's outcast.
Great heaven ward off that stroke from you!

XIV

— Your prayer to heaven, good sir, is generous:
How generous likewise that you do not name
Offended nature! She from all of us
Couched idle underneath our showering tree,
May quite withhold her most destructive flame;
And then what woeful women we!

XV

— Quite, could not be, fair lady; yet your youth
May run to drought in visionary schemes:
And a late waking to perceive the truth,
When day falls shrouding her supreme adieu,
Shows darker wastes than unaccomplished dreams:
And that may be in store for you.

XVI

— O sir, the truth, the truth! is 't in the skies,
Or in the grass, or in this heart of ours?
But O the truth, the truth! the many eyes
That look on it! the diverse things they see,
According to their thirst for fruit or flowers!
Pass on: it is the truth seek we.

XVII

— Lady, there is a truth of settled laws
That down the past burns like a great watch-fire.
Let youth hail changeful mornings; but your cause,
Whetting its edge to cut the race in two,
Is felony: you forfeit the bright lyre,
Much honour and much glory you!

XVIII

— Sir, was it glory, was it honour, pride,
And not as cat and serpent and poor slave,
Wherewith we walked in union by your side?
Spare to false womanliness her delicacy,
Or bid true manliness give ear, we crave:
In our defence thus chained are we.

XIX

— Yours, madam, were the privileges of life
Proper to man's ideal; you were the mark
Of action, and the banner in the strife:
Yea, of your very weakness once you drew
The strength that sounds the wells, outflies the lark:
Wrapped in a robe of flame were you!

XX

— Your friend looks thoughtful. Sir, when we were chill,
You clothed us warmly; all in honour! when
We starved you fed us; all in honour still:
Oh, all in honour, ultra-honourably!
Deep is the gratitude we owe to men,
For privileged indeed were we!

XXI

— You cite exceptions, madam, that are sad,
But come in the red struggle of our growth.
Alas, that I should have to say it! bad
Is two-sexed upon earth: this which you do,
Shows a nimal impatience, mental sloth:
Man monstrous, pining seraphs you!

XXII

— I fain would ask your friend . . . but I will ask
You, sir, how if in place of numbers vague,
Your sad exceptions were to break that mask
They wear for your cool mind historically,
And blaze like black lists of a *present* plague?
But in that light behold them we.

XXIII

— Your spirit breathes a mist upon our world,
Lady, and like a rain to pierce the roof
And drench the bed where toil-tossed man lies curled
In his hard-earned oblivion! You are few,
Scattered, ill-counselled, blinded: for a proof,
I have lived, and have known none like you

XXIV

— We may be blind to men, sir: we embrace
A future now beyond the fowler's nets.
Though few, we hold a promise for the race
That was not at our rising: you are free
To win brave mates; you lose but marionnettes.
He who 's for us, for him are we.

XXV

—Ah! madam, were they puppets who withstood
Youth's cravings for adventure to preserve
The dedicated ways of womanhood?
The light which leads us from the paths of rue,
That light above us, never seen to swerve,
Should be the home-lamp trimmed by you.

XXVI

—Ah! sir, our worshipped posture we perchance
Shall not abandon, though we see not how,
Being to that lamp-post fixed, we may advance
Beside our lords in any real degree,
Unless we move: and to advance is now
A sovereign need, think more than we.

XXVII

—So push you out of harbour in small craft,
With little seamanship; and comes a gale,
The world will laugh, the world has often laughed,
Lady, to see how bold when skies are blue,
When black winds churn the deeps how panic-pale,
How swift to the old nest fly you!

XXVIII

— What thinks your friend, kind sir? We have escaped
But partly that old half-tamed wild beast's paw
Whereunder woman, the weak thing, was shaped:
Men too have known the cramping enemy
In grim brute force, whom force of brain shall awe:
Him our deliverer, await we!

XXIX

— Delusions are with eloquence endowed,
And yours might pluck an angel from the spheres
To play in this revolt whereto you are vowed,
Deliverer, lady! but like summer dew
O'er fields that crack for rain your friends drop tears,
Who see the awakening for you.

XXX

— Is he our friend, there silent? he weeps not.
O sir, delusion mounting like a sun
On a mind blank as the white wife of Lot,
Giving it warmth and movement! if this be
Delusion, think of what thereby was won
For men, and dream of what win we

XXXI

—Lady, the destiny of minor powers,
Who would recast us, is but to convulse:
You enter on a strife that frets and sours;
You can but win sick disappointment's hue;
And simply an accelerated pulse,
Some tonic you have drunk moves you.

XXXII

—Thinks your friend so? Good sir, your wit is bright;
But wit that strives to speak the popular voice,
Puts on its nightcap and puts out its light;
Curfew, would seem your conqueror's decree
To women likewise: and we have no choice
Save darkness or rebellion, we!

XXXIII

—A plain safe intermediate way is cleft
By reason foiling passion: you that rave
Of mad alternatives to right and left
Echo the tempter, madam: and 't is due
Unto your sex to shun it as the grave,
This later apple offered you.

XXXIV

—This apple is not ripe, it is not sweet;
Nor rosy, sir, nor golden: eye and mouth
Are little wooed by it; yet we would eat.
We are somewhat tired of Eden, is our plea.
We have thirsted long; this apple suits our drouth:
'T is good for men to halve, think we.

XXXV

—But say, what seek you, madam? 'T is enough
That you should have dominion o'er the springs
Domestic and man's heart: those ways, how rough,
How vile, outside the stately avenue
Where you walk sheltered by your angel's wings,
Are happily unknown to you.

XXXVI

—We hear women's shrieks on them. We like your phrase,
Dominion domestic! And that roar,
'What seek you?' is of tyrants in all days.
Sir, get you something of our purity,
And we will of your strength: we ask no more.
That is the sum of what seek we.

XXXVII

— O for an image, madam, in one word,
To show you as the lightning night reveals,
Your error and your perils: you have erred
In mind only, and the perils that ensue
Swift heels may soften; wherefore to swift heels
Address your hopes of safety you!

XXXVIII

— To err in mind, sir . . . your friend smiles: he may!
To err in mind, if err in mind we can,
Is grievous error you do well to stay.
But O how different from reality
Men's fiction is! how like you in the plan,
Is woman, knew you her as we!

XXXIX

— Look, lady, where yon river winds its line
Toward sunset, and receives on breast and face
The splendour of fair life: to be divine,
'T is nature bids you be to nature true,
Flowing with beauty, lending earth your grace,
Reflecting heaven in clearness you.

XL

— Sir, you speak well: your friend no word vouchsafes.
To flow with beauty, breeding fools and worse,
Cowards and worse: at such fair life she chafes
Who is not wholly of the nursery,
Nor of your schools: we share the primal curse;
Together shake it off, say we!

XLI

— Here, then, my friend, madam! Tongue-restrained he stands
Till words are thoughts, and thoughts, like swords enriched
With traceries of the artificer's hands,
Are fire-proved steel to cut, fair flowers to view. —
Do I hear him? Oh, he is bewitched, bewitched!
Heed him not! Traitress beauties you!

XLII

— We have won a champion, sisters, and a sage!
— Ladies, you win a guest to a good feast!
— Sir spokesman, sneers are weakness veiling rage.
— Of weakness, and wise men, you have the key.
— Then are there fresher mornings mounting East
Than ever yet have dawned, sing we!

XLIII

— False ends as false began, madam, be sure!
— What lure there is the pure cause purifies!
— Who purifies the victim of the lure?
— That soul which bids us our high light pursue.
— Some heights are measured down: the wary wise
Shun Reason in the masque with you!

XLIV

— Sir, for the friend you bring us, take our thanks.
Yes, Beauty was of old this barren goal;
A thing with claws; and brute-like in her pranks!
But could she give more loyal guarantee
Than wooing wisdom, that in her a soul
Has risen? Adieu: content are we!

XLV

Those ladies led their captive to the flood's
Green edge. He floating with them seemed the most
Fool-flushed old noddy ever crowned with buds.
Happier than I! Then, why not wiser too?
For he that lives with Beauty, he may boast
His comrade over me and you.

XLVI

Have women nursed some dream since Helen sailed
Over the sea of blood the blushing star,
That beauty, whom frail man as Goddess hailed,
When not possessing her (for such is he!),
Might in a wondering season seen afar,
Be tamed to say not 'I,' but 'we'?

XLVII

And shall they make of Beauty their estate,
The fortress and the weapon of their sex?
Shall she in her frost-brilliancy dictate,
More queenly than of old, how we must woo,
Ere she will melt? The halter 's on our necks,
Kick as it likes us, I and you.

XLVIII

Certain it is, if Beauty has disdained
Her ancient conquests, with an aim thus high:
If this, if that, if more, the fight is gained.
But can she keep her followers without fee?
Yet ah! to hear anew those ladies cry,
He who 's for us, for him are we!

—

JUGGLING JERRY

I

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes:
  By the old hedge-side we 'll halt a stage.
It 's nigh my last above the daisies:
  My next leaf 'll be man's blank page.
Yes, my old girl! and it 's no use crying:
  Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
One that outjuggles all 's been spying
  Long to have me, and he has me now.

II

We 've travelled times to this old common:
  Often we 've hung our pots in the gorse.
We 've had a stirring life, old woman!
  You, and I, and the old grey horse.
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
  Found us coming to their call:
Now they 'll miss us at our stations:
  There 's a Juggler outjuggles all!

III

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!
Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.
Easy to think that grieving 's folly,
When the hand 's firm as driven stakes!
Ay, when we 're strong, and braced, and manful,
Life 's a sweet fiddle: but we 're a batch
Born to become the Great Juggler's han'ful:
Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

IV

Here 's where the lads of the village cricket:
I was a lad not wide from here:
Could n't I whip off the bale from the wicket?
Like an old world those days appear!
Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatched ale-house — I know them!
They are old friends of my halts, and seem,
Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:
Juggling don't hinder the heart's esteem.

V

Juggling 's no sin, for we must have victual:
Nature allows us to bait for the fool.
Holding one's own makes us juggle no little;
But, to increase it, hard juggling 's the rule.
You that are sneering at my profession,
Have n't you juggled a vast amount?
There 's the Prime Minister, in one Session,
Juggles more games than my sins 'll count.

VI

I 've murdered insects with mock thunder:
Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.
I 've made bread from the bump of wonder:
That 's my business, and there 's my tale.
Fashion and rank all praised the professor:
Ay! and I 've had my smile from the Queen:
Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!
Ain't this a sermon on that scene?

VII

I 've studied men from my topsy-turvy
Close, and, I reckon, rather true.
Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:
Most, a dash between the two.
But it 's a woman, old girl, that makes me
Think more kindly of the race:
And it 's a woman, old girl, that shakes me
When the Great Juggler I must face.

VIII

We two were married, due and legal:
Honest we 've lived since we 've been one.
Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:
You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.
Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!
All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.
Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!
Now from his old girl he 's juggled away.

IX

It 's past parsons to console us:
No, nor no doctor fetch for me:
I can die without my bolus;
Two of a trade, lass, never agree!
Parson and Doctor! — don't they love rarely,
Fighting the devil in other men's fields!
Stand up yourself and match him fairly:
Then see how the rascal yields!

X

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting
Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:
Coin I 've stored, and you won't be wanting:
You sha'n't beg from the troughs and tubs.
Nobly you 've stuck to me, though in his kitchen
Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!
Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,
But your old Jerry you never forsook.

XI

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;
Let 's have comfort and be at peace.
Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.
Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.
May be — for none see in that black hollow —
It 's just a place where we 're held in pawn,
And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,
It 's just the sword-trick — I ain't quite gone!

XII

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
Gold-like and warm: it 's the prime of May.
Better than mortar, brick and putty,
Is God's house on a blowing day.
Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it:
All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?
There 's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,
But He 's by us, juggling the change.

XIII

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,
Once — it 's long gone — when two gulls we beheld,
Which, as the moon got up, were flying
Down a big wave that sparked and swelled.
Crack, went a gun: one fell: the second
Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new luck
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd: —
Drop me a kiss — I 'm the bird dead-struck!

THE OLD CHARTIST

I

Whate'er I be, old England is my dam!
So there 's my answer to the judges, clear.
I 'm nothing of a fox, nor of a lamb;
I don't know how to bleat nor how to leer:
I 'm for the nation!
That 's why you see me by the wayside here,
Returning home from transportation.

II

It 's Summer in her bath this morn, I think.
I 'm fresh as dew, and chirpy as the birds:
And just for joy to see old England wink
Thro' leaves again, I could harangue the herds:
Is n't it something
To speak out like a man when you 've got words,
And prove you 're not a stupid dumb thing?

III

They shipp'd me off for it; I 'm here again.
Old England is my dam, whate'er I be!
Says I, I 'll tramp it home, and see the grain:
If you see well, you 're king of what you see:
Eyesight is having,
If you 're not given, I said, to gluttony.
Such talk to ignorance sounds as raving.

IV

You dear old brook, that from his Grace's park
Come bounding! on you run near my old town:
My lord can't lock the water; nor the lark,
Unless he kills him, can my lord keep down.
Up, is the song-note!
I 've tried it, too: — for comfort and renown,
I rather pitch'd upon the wrong note.

V

I 'm not ashamed: Not beaten 's still my boast:
Again I 'll rouse the people up to strike.
But home 's where different politics jar most.
Respectability the women like.
This form, or that form, —
The Government may be hungry pike,
But don't you mount a Chartist platform!

VI

Well, well! Not beaten — spite of them, I shout;
And my estate is suffering for the Cause. —
No, — what is yon brown water-rat about,
Who washes his old poll with busy paws?
What does he mean by 't?
It 's like defying all our natural laws,
For him to hope that he 'll get clean by 't.

VII

His seat is on a mud-bank, and his trade
Is dirt: — he 's quite contemptible; and yet
The fellow 's all as anxious as a maid
To show a decent dress, and dry the wet.
Now it 's his whisker,
And now his nose, and ear: he seems to get
Each moment at the motion brisker!

VIII

To see him squat like little chaps at school,
I could let fly a laugh with all my might.
He peers, hangs both his fore-paws: — bless that fool,
He 's bobbing at his frill now! — what a sight!
Licking the dish up,
As if he thought to pass from black to white,
Like parson into lawny bishop.

IX

The elms and yellow reed-flags in the sun,
Look on quite grave: — the sunlight flecks his side;
And links of bindweed-flowers round him run,
And shine up doubled with him in the tide.
I'm nearly splitting,
But nature seems like seconding his pride,
And thinks that his behaviour 's fitting.

X

That isle o' mud looks baking dry with gold.
His needle-muzzle still works out and in.
It really is a wonder to behold,
And makes me feel the bristles of my chin.
Judged by appearance,
I fancy of the two I 'm nearer Sin,
And might as well commence a clearance.

XI

And that 's what my fine daughter said: — she meant
Pray, hold your tongue, and wear a Sunday face.
Her husband, the young linendraper, spent
Much argument thereon: — I 'm their disgrace.
Bother the couple!
I feel superior to a chap whose place
Commands him to be neat and supple.

XII

But if I go and say to my old hen:
I 'll mend the gentry's boots, and keep discreet,
Until they grow *too* violent, — why, then,
A warmer welcome I might chance to meet:
Warmer and better.
And if she fancies her old cock is beat,
And drops upon her knees — so let her !

XIII

She suffered for me: — women, you 'll observe,
Don't suffer for a Cause, but for a man.
When I was in the dock she show'd her nerve:
I saw beneath her shawl my old tea-can.
Trembling . . . she brought it
To screw me for my work: she loath'd my plan,
And therefore doubly kind I thought it.

XIV

I 've never lost the taste of that same tea:
That liquor on my logic floats like oil,
When I state facts, and fellows disagree.
For human creatures all are in a coil;
All may want pardon.
I see a day when every pot will boil
Harmonious in one great Tea-garden !

XV

We wait the setting of the Dandy's day,
Before that time! — He 's furbishing his dress, —
He *will* be ready for it! — and I say,
That yon old dandy rat amid the cress, —
Thanks to hard labour! —
If cleanliness is next to godliness,
The old fat fellow 's heaven's neighbour!

XVI

You teach me a fine lesson, my old boy!
I 've looked on my superiors far too long,
And small has been my profit as my joy.
You 've done the right while I 've denounced the wrong.
Prosper me later!
Like you I will despise the sniggering throng,
And please myself and my Creator.

XVII

I 'll bring the linendraper and his wife
Some day to see you; taking off my hat.
Should they ask why, I 'll answer: in my life
I never found so true a democrat.
Base occupation
Can't rob you of your own esteem, old rat!
I 'll preach you to the British nation.

MARTIN'S PUZZLE

I

THERE she goes up the street with her book in her hand,
And her Good morning, Martin! Ay, lass, how d' ye do?
Very well, thank you, Martin! — I can't understand!
I might just as well never have cobbled a shoe!
I can't understand it. She talks like a song;
Her voice takes your ear like the ring of a glass;
She seems to give gladness while limping along,
Yet sinner ne'er suffer'd like that little lass.

II

First, a fool of a boy ran her down with a cart.
Then, her fool of a father — a blacksmith by trade —
Why the deuce does he tell us it half broke his heart?
His heart! — where 's the leg of the poor little maid!
Well, that 's not enough; they must push her downstairs,
To make her go crooked: but why count the list?
If it 's right to suppose that our human affairs
Are all order'd by heaven — there, bang goes my fist!

III

For if angels can look on such sights — never mind!
When you 're next to blaspheming, it 's best to be mum.
The parson declares that her woes were n't designed;
But, then, with the parson it 's all kingdom-come.
Lose a leg, save a soul — a convenient text;
I call it Tea doctrine, not savouring of God.
When poor little Molly wants 'chastening,' why, next
The Archangel Michael might taste of the rod.

IV

But, to see the poor darling go limping for miles
To read books to sick people! — and just of an age
When girls learn the meaning of ribands and smiles!
Makes me feel like a squirrel that turns in a cage.
The more I push thinking the more I revolve:
I never get farther: — and as to her face,
It starts up when near on my puzzle I solve,
And says, 'This crush'd body seems such a sad case.'

V

Not that she 's for complaining: she reads to earn pence;
And from those who can't pay, simple thanks are enough.
Does she leave lamentation for chaps without sense?
Howsoever, she 's made up of wonderful stuff.
Ay, the soul in her body must be a stout cord,
She sings little hymns at the close of the day,
Though she has but three fingers to lift to the Lord,
And only one leg to kneel down with to pray.

VI

What I ask is, Why persecute such a poor dear,
If there 's Law above all? Answer that if you can!
Irreligious I 'm not; but I look on this sphere
As a place where a man should just think like a man.
It is n't fair dealing! But, contrariwise,
Do bullets in battle the wicked select?
Why, then it 's all chance-work! And yet, in her eyes,
She holds a fixed something by which I am checked.

VII

Yonder riband of sunshine aslope on the wall,
If you eye it a minute 'll have the same look:
So kind! and so merciful! God of us all!
It 's the very same lesson we get from the Book.
Then, is Life but a trial? Is that what is meant?
Some must toil, and some perish, for others below:
The injustice to each spreads a common content;
Ay! I 've lost it again, for it can't be quite so.

VIII

She 's the victim of fools: that seems nearer the mark.
On earth there are engines and numerous fools.
Why the Lord can permit them, we 're still in the dark;
He does, and in some sort of way they 're his tools.
It 's a roundabout way, with respect let me add,
If Molly goes crippled that we may be taught:
But, perhaps, it 's the only way, though it 's so bad;
In that case we 'll bow down our heads, — as we ought.

IX

But the worst of *me* is, that when I bow my head,
I perceive a thought wriggling away in the dust,
And I follow its tracks, quite forgetful, instead
Of humble acceptance: for, question I must!
Here 's a creature made carefully — carefully made!
Put together with craft, and then stamped on, and why?
The answer seems nowhere: it 's discord that 's played.
The sky 's a blue dish! — an implacable sky!

X

Stop a moment. I seize an idea from the pit.
They tell us that discord, though discord, alone,
Can be harmony when the notes properly fit:
Am I judging all things from a single false tone?
Is the Universe one immense Organ, that rolls
From devils to angels? I 'm blind with the sight.
It pours such a splendour on heaps of poor souls!
I might try at kneeling with Molly to-night.

MARIAN

I

She can be as wise as we,
And wiser when she wishes;
She can knit with cunning wit,
And dress the homely dishes.
She can flourish staff or pen,
And deal a wound that lingers;
She can talk the talk of men,
And touch with thrilling fingers.

II

Match her ye across the sea,
Natures fond and fiery;
Ye who zest the turtle's nest
With the eagle's eyrie.
Soft and loving is her soul,
Swift and lofty soaring;
Mixing with its dove-like dole
Passionate adoring.

III

Such a she who 'll match with me?
In flying or pursuing,
Subtle wiles are in her smiles
To set the world a-wooing.
She is steadfast as a star,
And yet the maddest maiden:
She can wage a gallant war,
And give the peace of Eden.

SONNETS

LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

THE STAR SIRIUS

Bright Sirius ! that when Orion pales
To dotlings under moonlight still art keen
With cheerful fervour of a warrior's mien
Who holds in his great heart the battle-scales :
Unquenched of flame though swift the flood assails,
Reducing many lustrous to the lean :
Be thou my star, and thou in me be seen
To show what source divine is, and prevails.
Long watches through, at one with godly night,
I mark thee planting joy in constant fire ;
And thy quick beams, whose jets of life inspire
Life to the spirit, passion for the light,
Dark Earth since first she lost her lord from sight
Has viewed and felt them sweep her as a lyre.

SENSE AND SPIRIT

The senses loving Earth or well or ill,
Ravel yet more the riddle of our lot.
The mind is in their trammels, and lights not
By trimming fear-bred tales; nor does the will
To find in nature things which less may chill
An ardour that desires, unknowing what.
Till we conceive her living we go distraught,
At best but circle-windsails of a mill.
Seeing she lives, and of her joy of life
Creatively has given us blood and breath
For endless war and never wound unhealed,
The gloomy Wherefore of our battle-field
Solves in the Spirit, wrought of her through strife
To read her own and trust her down to death.

EARTH'S SECRET

Not solitarily in fields we find
Earth's secret open, though one page is there;
Her plainest, such as children spell, and share
With bird and beast; raised letters for the blind.
Not where the troubled passions toss the mind,
In turbid cities, can the key be bare.
It hangs for those who hither thither fare,
Close interthreading nature with our kind.
They, hearing History speak, of what men were,
And have become, are wise. The gain is great
In vision and solidity; it lives.
Yet at a thought of life apart from her,
Solidity and vision lose their state,
For Earth, that gives the milk, the spirit gives.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

Thy greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsoured
He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflowered
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips,
The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
Close mirrors of us: thence had he the laugh
We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand beeves
At pasture! thence thy songs, that winnow chaff
From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last leaves
Whirl, if they have no response — they enforced
To fatten Earth when from her soul divorced.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE (*continued*)

How smiles he at a generation ranked
In gloomy noddings over life! They pass.
Not he to feed upon a breast unthanked,
Or eye a beauteous face in a cracked glass.
But he can spy that little twist of brain
Which moved some weighty leader of the blind,
Unwitting 't was the goad of personal pain,
To view in curst eclipse our Mother's mind,
And show us of some rigid harridan
The wretched bondmen till the end of time.
O lived the Master now to paint us Man,
That little twist of brain would ring a chime
Of whence it came and what it caused, to start
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart.

INTERNAL HARMONY

Assured of worthiness we do not dread
Competitors; we rather give them hail
And greeting in the lists where we may fail:
Must, if we bear an aim beyond the head!
My betters are my masters: purely fed
By their sustainment I likewise shall scale
Some rocky steps between the mount and vale;
Meanwhile the mark I have and I will wed.
So that I draw the breath of finer air,
Station is nought, nor footways laurel-strewn,
Nor rivals tightly belted for the race.
Good speed to them! My place is here or there;
My pride is that among them I have place:
And thus I keep this instrument in tune.

GRACE AND LOVE

Two flower-enfolding crystal vases she
I love fills daily, mindful but of one:
And close behind pale morn she, like the sun
Priming our world with light, pours, sweet to see,
Clear water in the cup, and into me
The image of herself: and that being done,
Choice of what blooms round her fair garden run
In climbers or in creepers or the tree,
She ranges with unerring fingers fine,
To harmony so vivid that through sight
I hear, I have her heavenliness to fold
Beyond the senses, where such love as mine,
Such grace as hers, should the strange Fates withhold
Their starry more from her and me, unite.

APPRECIATION

Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared,
Nor Beauty Beauty ere young Love was born:
And thou when I lay hidden wast as morn
At city-windows, touching eyelids bleared;
To none by her fresh wingedness endeared;
Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.
I the last echoes of Diana's horn
In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.
No longer wast thou then mere light, fair soul!
And more than simple duty moved thy feet.
New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,
From hope, effused: though not less pure a scroll
May men read on the heart I taught to beat:
That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

THE DISCIPLINE OF WISDOM

Rich labour is the struggle to be wise,
While we make sure the struggle cannot cease.
Else better were it in some bower of peace
Slothful to swing, contending with the flies.
You point at Wisdom fixed on lofty skies,
As mid barbarian hordes a sculptured Greece:
She falls. To live and shine, she grows her fleece,
Is shorn, and rubs with follies and with lies.
So following her, your hewing may attain
The right to speak unto the mute, and shun
That sly temptation of the illumined brain,
Deliveries oracular, self-spun.
Who sweats not with the flock will seek in vain
To shed the words which are ripe fruit of sun.

THE STATE OF AGE

Rub thou thy battered lamp: nor claim nor beg
Honours from aught about thee. Light the young.
Thy frame is as a dusty mantle hung,
O grey one! pendant on a loosened peg.
Thou art for this our life an ancient egg,
Or a tough bird: thou hast a rudderless tongue,
Turning dead trifles, like the cock of dung;
Which runs, Time's contrast to thy halting leg.
Nature, it is most sure, not thee admires.
But hast thou in thy season set her fires
To burn from Self to Spirit through the lash,
Honoured the sons of Earth shall hold thee high:
Yea, to spread light when thy proud letter I
Drops prone and void as any thoughtless dash.

PROGRESS

In Progress you have little faith, say you:
Men will maintain dear interests, wreak base hates,
By force, and gentle women choose their mates
Most amorously from the gilded fighting crew:
The human heart Bellona's mad halloo
Will ever fire to dicing with the Fates.
'Now at this time,' says History, 'those two States
'Stood ready their past wrestling to renew.
'They sharpened arms and showed them, like the brutes
'Whose haunches quiver. But a yellow blight
'Fell on their waxing harvests. They deferred
'The bloody settlement of their disputes
'Till God should bless them better.' They did right.
And naming Progress, both shall have the word.

THE WORLD'S ADVANCE

JUDGE mildly the tasked world; and disincline
To brand it, for it bears a heavy pack.
You have perchance observed the inebriate's track
At night when he has quitted the inn-sign:
He plays diversions on the homeward line,
Still that way bent albeit his legs are slack:
A hedge may take him, but he turns not back,
Nor turns this burdened world, of curving spine.
'Spiral,' the memorable Lady terms
Our mind's ascent: our world's advance presents
That figure on a flat; the way of worms.
Cherish the promise of its good intents,
And warn it, not one instinct to efface
Ere Reason ripens for the vacant place.

A CERTAIN PEOPLE

As Puritans they prominently wax,
And none more kindly gives and takes hard knocks.
Strong psalmic chanting, like to nasal cocks,
They join to thunderings of their hearty thwacks.
But naughtiness, with hoggery, not lacks
When Peace another door in them unlocks,
Where conscience shows the eyeing of an ox
Grown dully apprehensive of an Axe.
Graceless they are when gone to frivolousness,
Fearing the God they flout, the God they glut.
They need their pious exercises less
Than schooling in the Pleasures: fair belief
That these are devilish only to their thief,
Charged with an Axe nigh on the occiput.

THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS

That Garden of sedate Philosophy
Once flourished, fenced from passion and mishap,
A shining spot upon a shaggy map;
Where mind and body, in fair junction free,
Luted their joyful concord; like the tree
From root to flowering twigs a flowing sap.
Clear Wisdom found in tended Nature's lap,
Of gentlemen the happy nursery.
That Garden would on light supremest verge,
Were the long drawing of an equal breath
Healthful for Wisdom's head, her heart, her aims.
Our world which for its Babels wants a scourge,
And for its wilds a husbandman, acclaims
The crucifix that came of Nazareth.

A LATER ALEXANDRIAN

An inspiration caught from dubious hues,
Filled him, and mystic wrynesses he chased;
For they lead farther than the single-faced,
Wave subtler promise when desire pursues.
The moon of cloud discoloured was his Muse,
His pipe the reed of the old moaning waste.
Love was to him with anguish fast enlaced,
And Beauty where she walked blood-shot the dews.
Men railed at such a singer; women thrilled
Responsively: he sang not Nature's own
Divinest, but his lyric had a tone,
As 't were a forest-echo of her voice:
What barrenly they yearn for seemed distilled
From what they dread, who do through tears rejoice.

AN ORSON OF THE MUSE

Her son, albeit the Muse's livery
And measured courtly paces rouse his taunts,
Naked and hairy in his savage haunts,
To Nature only will he bend the knee;
Spouting the founts of her distillery
Like rough rock-sources; and his woes and wants,
Being Nature's, civil limitation daunts
His utterance never; the nymphs blush, not he.
Him, when he blows of Earth, and Man, and Fate,
The Muse will hearken to with graver ear
Than many of her train can waken: him
Would fain have taught what fruitful things and dear
Must sink beneath the tidewaves, of their weight,
If in no vessel built for sea they swim.

THE POINT OF TASTE

Unhappy poets of a sunken prime!
You to reviewers are as ball to bat.
They shadow you with Homer, knock you flat
With Shakespeare: bludgeons brainingly sublime
On you the excommunicates of Rhyme,
Because you sing not in the living Fat.
The wiry whizz of an intrusive gnat
Is verse that shuns their self-producing time.
Sound them their clocks, with loud alarum trump,
Or watches ticking temporal at their fobs,
You win their pleased attention. But, bright God
O' the lyre, what bully-drawlers they applaud!
Rather for us a tavern-catch, and bump
Chorus where Lumpkin with his Giles hobnobs.

CAMELUS SALTAT

What say you, critic, now you have become
An author and maternal? — in this trap
(To quote you) of poor hollow folk who rap
On instruments as like as drum to drum.
You snarled tut-tut for welcome to tum-tum,
So like the nose fly-teased in its noon's nap.
You scratched an insect-slaughtering thunder-clap
With that between the fingers and the thumb.
It seemeth mad to quit the Olympian couch,
Which bade our public gobble or reject.
O spectacle of Peter, shrewdly pecked,
Piper, by his own pepper from his pouch!
What of the sneer, the jeer, the voice austere,
You dealt? — the voice austere, the jeer, the sneer.

CAMELUS SALTAT (*continued*)

Oracle of the market! thence you drew
The taste which stamped you guide of the inept.—
A North-sea pilot, Hildebrand yclept,
A sturdy and a briny, once men knew.
He loved small beer, and for that copious brew,
To roll ingurgitation till he slept,
Rations exchanged with flavour for the adept:
And merrily plied him captain, mate and crew.
At last this dancer to the Polar star
Sank, washed out within, and overboard was pitched,
To drink the sea and pilot him to land.
O captain-critic! printed, neatly stitched,
Know, while the pillory-eggs fly fast, they are
Not eggs, but the drowned soul of Hildebrand.

TO J. M.

Let Fate or Insufficiency provide
Mean ends for men who what they are would be:
Penned in their narrow day no change they see
Save one which strikes the blow to brutes and pride.
Our faith is ours and comes not on a tide:
And whether Earth's great offspring, by decree,
Must rot if they abjure rapacity,
Not argument but effort shall decide.
They number many heads in that hard flock:
Trim swordsmen they push forth: yet try thy steel.
Thou, fighting for poor humankind, wilt feel
The strength of Roland in thy wrist to hew
A chasm sheer into the barrier rock,
And bring the army of the faithful through.

TO A FRIEND LOST

(T. T.)

When I remember, friend, whom lost I call,
Because a man beloved is taken hence,
The tender humour and the fire of sense
In your good eyes; how full of heart for all,
And chiefly for the weaker by the wall,
You bore that lamp of sane benevolence;
Then see I round you Death his shadows dense
Divide, and at your feet his emblems fall.
For surely are you one with the white host,
Spirits, whose memory in our vital air
Through the great love of Earth they had: lo, these,
Like beams that throw the path on tossing seas,
Can bid us feel we keep them in the ghost,
Partakers of a strife they joyed to share.

MY THEME

Of me and of my theme think what thou wilt:
The song of gladness one straight bolt can check.
But I have never stood at Fortune's beck:
Were she and her light crew to run atilt
At my poor holding little would be spilt;
Small were the praise for singing o'er that wreck.
Who courts her dooms to strife his bended neck;
He grasps a blade, not always by the hilt.
Nathless she strikes at random, can be fell
With other than those votaries she deals
The black or brilliant from her thunder-rift.
I say but that this love of Earth reveals
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

MY THEME (*continued*)

'T is true the wisdom that my mind exacts
Through contemplation from a heart unbent
By many tempests may be stained and rent:
The summer flies it mightily attracts.
Yet they seem choicer than your sons of facts,
Which scarce give breathing of the sty's content
For their diurnal carnal nourishment:
Which treat with Nature in official pacts.
The deader body Nature could proclaim.
Much life have neither. Let the heavens of wrath
Rattle, then both scud scattering to froth.
But during calms the flies of idle aim
Less put the spirit out, less baffle thirst
For light than swinish grunters, blest or curst.

TIME AND SENTIMENT

I SEE a fair young couple in a wood,
And as they go, one bends to take a flower,
That so may be embalmed their happy hour,
And in another day, a kindred mood,
Haply together, or in solitude,
Recovered what the teeth of Time devour
The joy, the bloom, and the illusive power,
Wherewith by their young blood they are endued
To move all enviable, framed in May,
And of an aspect sisterly with Truth:
Yet seek they with Time's laughing things to wed:
Who will be prompted on some pallid day
To lift the hueless flower and show that dead,
Even such, and by this token, is their youth.

BALLADS AND POEMS OF TRAGIC LIFE

THE TWO MASKS

I

Melpomene among her livid people,
Ere stroke of lyre, upon Thaleia looks,
Warned by old contests that one museful ripple
Along those lips of rose with tendril hooks,
Forebodes disturbance in the springs of pathos,
Perchance may change of masks midway demand,
Albeit the man rise mountainous as Athos,
The woman wild as Cape Leucadia stand.

II

For this the Comic Muse exacts of creatures
Appealing to the fount of tears : that they
Strive never to outleap our human features,
And do Right Reason's ordinance obey,
In peril of the hum to laughter nighest.
But prove they under stress of action's fire
Nobleness, to that test of Reason highest,
She bows : she waves them for the loftier lyre.

ARCHDUCHESS ANNE

I

I

In middle age an evil thing
  Befell Archduchess Anne :
She looked outside her wedding-ring
  Upon a princely man.

II

Count Louis was for horse and arms ;
  And if its beacon waved,
or love ; but ladies had not charms
  To match a danger braved.

III

On battlefields he was the bow
  Bestrung to fly the shaft :
In idle hours his heart would flow
  As winds on currents waft.

IV

His blood was of those warrior tribes
That streamed from morning's fire,
Whom now with traps and now with bribes
The wily Council wire.

V

Archduchess Anne the Council ruled,
Count Louis his great dame;
And woe to both when one had cooled!
Little was she to blame.

VI

Among her chiefs who spun their plots,
Old Kraken stood the sword:
As sharp his wits for cutting knots
Of babble he abhorred.

VII

He reverenced her name and line,
Nor other merit had
Save soldierwise to wait her sign,
And do the deed she bade.

VIII

He saw her hand jump at her side
Ere royally she smiled
On Louis and his fair young bride
Where courtly ranks defiled.

IX

That was a moment when a shock
Through the procession ran,
And thrilled the plumes, and stayed the clock,
Yet smiled Archduchess Anne.

X

No touch gave she to hound in leash,
No wink to sword in sheath:
She seemed a woman scarce of flesh;
Above it, or beneath.

XI

Old Kraken spied with kennelled snarl,
His Lady deemed disgraced.
He rooted as on burning marl,
When out of Hall he paced.

XII

'T was seen he hammered striding legs,
And stopped, and strode again.
Now Vengeance has a brood of eggs,
But Patience must be hen.

XIII

Too slow are they for wrath to hatch,
Too hot for time to rear.
Old Kraken kept unwinking watch;
He marked his day appear.

XIV

He neighed a laugh, though moods were rough
With standards in revolt:
His nostrils took the news for snuff,
His smacking lips for salt.

XV

Count Louis' wavy cock's plumes led
His troops of black-haired manes,
A rebel; and old Kraken sped
To front him on the plains.

XVI

Then camp opposed to camp did they
Fret earth with panther claws
For signal of a bloody day,
Each reading from the Laws.

XVII

'Forefend it, heaven!' Count Louis cried,
'And let the righteous plead:
My country is a willing bride,
Was never slave decreed.

XVIII

'Not we for thirst of blood appeal
To sword and slaughter curst;
We have God's blessing on our steel,
Do we our pleading first.'

XIX

Count Louis, soul of chivalry,
Put trust in plighted word;
By starlight on the broad brown lea,
To bar the strife he spurred.

XX

Across his breast a crimson spot,
That in a quiver glowed,
The ruddy crested camp-fires shot,
As he to darkness rode.

XXI

He rode while omens called, beware
Old Kraken's pledge of faith!
A smile and waving hand in air,
And outward flew the wraith.

XXII

Before pale morn had mixed with gold,
His army roared, and chilled,
As men who have a woe foretold,
And see it red fulfilled.

XXIII

Away and to his young wife speed,
And say that Honour's dead!
Another word she will not need
To bow a widow's head.

XXIV

Old Kraken roped his white moustache
  Right, left, for savage glee:
— To swing him in his soldier's sash,
  Were kind for such as he!

XXV

Old Kraken's look hard Winter wears
  When sweeps the wild snow-blast:
He had the hug of Arctic bears
  For captives he held fast.

II

I

Archduchess Anne sat carved in frost,
Shut off from priest and spouse.
Her lips were locked, her arms were crossed,
Her eyes were in her brows.

II

One hand enclosed a paper scroll,
Held as a strangled asp.
So may we see the woman's soul
In her dire tempter's grasp.

III

Along that scroll Count Louis' doom
Throbbed till the letters flamed.
She saw him in his scornful bloom,
She saw him chained and shamed.

IV

Around that scroll Count Louis' fate
Was acted to her stare,
And hate in love and love in hate
Fought fell to smite or spare.

V

Between the day that struck her old,
And this black star of days,
Her heart swung like a storm-bell tolled
Above a town ablaze.

VI

His beauty pressed to intercede,
His beauty served him ill.
—Not Vengeance, 't is his rebel's deed,
'T is Justice, not our will!

VII

Yet who had sprung to life's full force
A breast that loveless dried?
But who had sapped it at the source,
With scarlet to her pride!

VIII

He brought her waning heart as 't were
New message from the skies.
And he betrayed, and left on her
The burden of their sighs.

IX

In floods her tender memories poured;
They foamed with waves of spite:
She crushed them, high her heart outsoared,
To keep her mind alight.

X

—The crawling creature, called in scorn
A woman! — with this pen
We sign a paper that may warn
His crowing fellowmen.

XI

—We read them lesson of a power
They slight who do us wrong.
That bitter hour this bitter hour
Provokes; by turns the strong!

XII

—That we were woman once is known:
That we are Justice now,
Above our sex, above the throne,
Men quaking shall avow.

XIII

Archduchess Anne ascending flew,
Her heart outsoared, but felt
The demon of her sex pursue,
Incensing or to melt.

XIV

Those counterfloods below at leap,
Still in her breast blew storm,
And farther up the heavenly steep,
Wrestled in angels' form.

XV

To disentangle one clear wish
Not of her sex, she sought;
And womanish to womanish,
Discerned in lighted thought.

XVI

With Louis' chance it went not well
When at herself she raged;
A woman, of whom men might tell
She doted, crazed and aged.

XVII

Or else enamoured of a sweet
Withdrawn, a vengeful crone!
And say, what figure at her feet
Is this that utters moan?

XVIII

The Countess Louis from her head
Drew veil: 'Great Lady, hear!
My husband deems you Justice dread,
I know you Mercy dear.

XIX

'His error upon him may fall;
He will not breathe a nay.
I am his helpless mate in all,
Except for grace to pray.

XX

'Perchance on me his choice inclined,
To give his House an heir:
I had not marriage with his mind,
His counsel could not share.

XXI

'I brought no portion for his weal
But this one instinct true,
Which bids me in my weakness kneel,
Archduchess Anne, to you.'

XXII

The frowning Lady uttered, 'Forth!'
Her look forbade delay:
'It is not mine to weigh your worth;
Your husband's others weigh.

XXIII

'Hence with the woman in your speech,
For nothing it avails
In woman's fashion to beseech
Where Justice holds the scales.'

XXIV

Then bent and went the lady wan,
Whose girlishness made grey
The thoughts that through Archduchess Anne
Shattered like stormy spray.

XXV

Long sat she there, as flame that strives
To hold on beating wind:
— His wife must be the fool of wives,
Or cunningly designed!

XXVI

She sat until the tempest-pitch
In her torn bosom fell;
— His wife must be a subtle witch
Or else God loves her well!

III

I

Old Kraken read a missive penned
By his great Lady's hand.
Her condescension called him friend,
To raise the crest she fanned.

II

Swiftly to where he lay encamped
It flew, yet breathed aloof
From woman's feeling, and he stamped
A heel more like a hoof.

III

She wrote of Mercy: 'She was loth
Too hard to goad a foe.'
He stamped, as when men drive an oath
Devils transcribe below.

IV

She wrote: 'We have him half by theft.'
His wrinkles glistened keen:
And see the Winter storm-cloud cleft
To lurid skies between!

V

When read old Kraken: 'Christ our Guide,'
His eyes were spikes of spar:
And see the white snow-storm divide
About an icy star!

VI

'She trusted him to understand,'
She wrote, and further prayed
That policy might rule the land.
Old Kraken's laughter neighed.

VII

Her words he took; her nods and winks
Treated as woman's fog.
The man-dog for his mistress thinks,
Not less her faithful dog.

VIII

She hugged a cloak old Kraken ripped;
Disguise to him he loathed.
—Your mercy, madam, shows you stripped,
While mine will keep you clothed.

IX

A rough ill-soldered scar in haste
He rubbed on his cheek-bone.
—Our policy the man shall taste;
Our mercy shall be shown.

X

'Count Louis, honour to your race
Decrees the Council-hall:
You 'scape the rope by special grace,
And like a soldier fall.'

XI

—I am a man of many sins,
Who for one virtue die,
Count Louis said. — They play at shins,
Who kick, was the reply.

XII

Uprose the day of crimson sight,
The day without a God.
At morn the hero said Good-night:
See there that stain on sod!

XIII

At morn the Countess Louis heard
Young light sing in the lark.
Ere eve it was that other bird,
Which brings the starless dark.

XIV

To heaven she vowed herself, and yearned
Beside her lord to lie.
Archduchess Anne on Kraken turned,
All white as a dead eye.

XV

If I could kill thee! shrieked her look:
If lightning sprang from Will!
An oaken head old Kraken shook,
And she might thank or kill.

XVI

The pride that fenced her heart in mail,
By mortal pain was torn.
Forth from her bosom leaped a wail,
As of a babe new-born.

XVII

She clad herself in courtly use,
And one who heard them prate,
Had said they differed upon views
Where statecraft raised debate.

XVIII

The wretch detested must she trust,
The servant master own:
Confide to godless cause so just,
And for God's blessing moan.

XIX

Austerely she her heart kept down,
Her woman's tongue was mute
When voice of People, voice of Crown,
In cannon held dispute.

XX

The Crown on seas of blood, like swine,
Swam forefoot at the throat:
It drank of its dear veins for wine,
Enough if it might float!

XXI

It sank with piteous yelp, resurged
Electrical with fear.
O had she on old Kraken urged
Her word of mercy clear!

XXII

O had they with Count Louis been
Accordant in his plea!
Cursed are the women vowed to screen
A heart that all can see!

XXIII

The godless drove unto a goal
Was worse than vile defeat.
Did vengeance prick Count Louis' soul
They dressed him luscious meat.

XXIV

Worms will the faithless find their lies
In the close treasure-chest.
Without a God no day can rise,
Though it should slay our best.

XXV

The Crown it furled a draggled flag,
It sheathed a broken blade.
Behold its triumph in the hag
That lives with looks decayed!

XXVI

And lo, the man of oaken head,
Of soldier's honour bare,
He fled his land, but most he fled
His Lady's frigid stare.

XXVII

Judged by the issue we discern
God's blessing, and the bane.
Count Louis' dust would fill an urn,
His deeds are waving grain.

XXVIII

And she that helped to slay, yet bade
To spare the fated man,
Great were her errors, but she had
Great heart, Archduchess Anne.

THE SONG OF THEODOLINDA.

I

Queen Theodolind has built
In the earth a furnace-bed:
There the Traitor Nail that spilt
Blood of the anointed Head,
Red of heat, resolves in shame:
White of heat, awakes to flame.
Beat, beat! white of heat,
Red of heat, beat, beat!

II

Mark the skeleton of fire
Lightening from its thunder-roof:
So comes this that saw expire
Him we love, for our behoof!
Red of heat, O white of heat,
This from off the Cross we greet.

III

Brown-cowled hammermen around
Nerve their naked arms to strike
Death with Resurrection crowned,
Each upon that cruel spike.
Red of heat the furnace leaps,
White of heat transfigured sleeps.

IV

Hard against the furnace core
Holds the Queen her streaming eyes:
Lo! that thing of piteous gore
In the lap of radiance lies,
Red of heat, as when He takes,
White of heat, whom earth forsakes.

V

Forth with it, and crushing ring
Iron hymns, for men to hear
Echoes of the deeds that sting
Earth into its graves, and fear!
Red of heat, He maketh thus,
White of heat, a crown of us.

VI

This that killed Thee, kissed Thee, Lord!
Touched Thee, and we touch it: dear,
Dark it is; adored, abhorred:
Vilest, yet most sainted here.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
In it hell and heaven meet.

VII

I behold our morning day
When they chased Him out with rods
Up to where this traitor lay
Thirsting; and the blood was God's!
Red of heat, it shall be pressed,
White of heat, once on my breast!

VIII

Quick! the reptile in me shrieks,
Not the soul. Again; the Cross
Burn there. Oh! this pain it wreaks
Rapture is: pain is not loss.
Red of heat, the tooth of Death,
White of heat, has caught my breath.

IX

Brand me, bite me, bitter thing!
Thus He felt, and thus I am
One with Him in suffering,
One with Him in bliss, the Lamb.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
Thus is bitterness made sweet.

X

Now am I, who bear that stamp
Scorched in me, the living sign
Sole on earth — the lighted lamp
Of the dreadful day divine.
White of heat, beat on it fast!
Red of heat, its shape has passed.

XI

Out in angry sparks they fly,
They that sentenced Him to bleed:
Pontius and his troop: they die,
Damned for ever for the deed!
White of heat in vain they soar:
Red of heat they strew the floor.

XII

Fury on it! have its debt!
Thunder on the Hill accurst,
Golgotha, be ye! and sweat
Blood, and thirst the Passion's thirst.
Red of heat and white of heat,
Champ it like fierce teeth that eat.

XIII

Strike it as the ages crush
Towers! for while a shape is seen
I am rivalled. Quench its blush,
Devil! But it crowns me Queen,
Red of heat, as none before,
White of heat, the circlet wore.

XIV

Lowly I will be, and quail,
Crawling, with a beggar's hand:
On my breast the branded Nail,
On my head the iron band.
Red of heat, are none so base!
White of heat, none know such grace!

XV

In their heaven the sainted hosts,
Robed in violet unflecked,
Gaze on humankind as ghosts:
I draw down a ray direct.
Red of heat, across my brow,
White of heat, I touch Him now.

XVI

Robed in violet, robed in gold,
Robed in pearl, they make our dawn.
What am I to them? Behold
What ye are to me, and fawn.
Red of heat, be humble, ye!
White of heat, O teach it me!

XVII

Martyrs! hungry peaks in air,
Rent with lightnings, clad with snow,
Crowned with stars! you strip me bare,
Pierce me, shame me, stretch me low,
Red of heat, but it may be,
White of heat, some envy me!

XVIII

O poor enviers! God's own gifts
Have a devil for the weak.
Yea, the very force that lifts
Finds the vessel's secret leak.
Red of heat, I rise o'er all:
White of heat, I faint, I fall.

XIX

Those old Martyrs sloughed their pride,
Taking humbleness like mirth.
I am to His Glory tied,
I that witness Him on earth!
Red of heat, my pride of dust,
White of heat, feeds fire in trust.

XX

Kindle me to constant fire,
Lest the nail be but a nail!
Give me wings of great desire,
Lest I look within, and fail!
Red of heat, the furnace light,
White of heat, fix on my sight.

XXI

Never for the Chosen peace!
Know, by me tormented know,
Never shall the wrestling cease
Till with our outlasting Foe
Red of heat to white of heat,
Roll we to the Godhead's feet!
Beat, beat! white of heat,
Red of heat, beat, beat!

A PREACHING FROM A SPANISH BALLAD

I

Ladies who in chains of wedlock
Chafe at an unequal yoke,
Not to nightingales give hearing;
Better this, the raven's croak.

II

Down the Prado strolled my seigneur,
Arm at lordly bow on hip,
Fingers trimming his moustachios,
Eyes for pirate fellowship.

III

Home sat she that owned him master;
Like the flower bent to ground
Rain-surcharged and sun-forsaken;
Heedless of her hair unbound.

IV

Sudden at her feet a lover
Palpitating knelt and wooed;
Seemed a very gift from heaven
To the starved of common food.

V

Love me? she his vows repeated:
Fiery vows oft sung and thrummed:
Wondered, as on earth a stranger;
Thirsted, trusted, and succumbed.

VI

O beloved youth! my lover!
Mine! my lover! take my life
Wholly: thine in soul and body,
By this oath of more than wife!

VII

Know me for no helpless woman;
Nay, nor coward, though I sink
Awed beside thee, like an infant
Learning shame ere it can think.

VIII

Swing me hence to do thee service,
Be thy succour, prove thy shield;
Heaven will hear! — in house thy handmaid,
Squire upon the battlefield.

IX

At my breasts I cool thy footsoles;
Wine I pour, I dress thy meats;
Humbly, when my lord it pleaseth,
Lie with him on perfumed sheets:

X

Pray for him, my blood's dear fountain.
While he sleeps, and watch his yawn
In that wakening babelike moment,
Sweeter to my thought than dawn!—

XI

Thundered then her lord of thunders;
Burst the door, and flashing sword,
Loud disgorged the woman's title:
Condemnation in one word.

XII

Grand by righteous wrath transfigured,
Towers the husband who provides
In his person judge and witness,
Death's black doorkeeper besides!

XIII

Round his head the ancient terrors,
Conjured of the stronger's law,
Circle, to abash the creature
Daring twist beneath his paw.

XIV

How though he hath squandered Honour!
High of Honour let him scold:
Gilding of the man's possession,
'T is the woman's coin of gold.

XV

She inheriting from many
Bleeding mothers bleeding sense,
Feels 'twixt her and sharp-fanged nature
Honour first did plant the fence.

XVI

Nature, that so shrieks for justice;
Honour's thirst, that blood will slake;
These are women's riddles, roughly
Mixed to write them saint or snake.

XVII

Never nature cherished woman:
She throughout the sexes' war
Serves as temptress and betrayer,
Favouring man, the muscular.

XVIII

Lureful is she, bent for folly;
Doating on the child which crows:
Yours to teach him grace in fealty,
What the bloom is, what the rose.

XIX

Hard the task: your prison-chamber
Widens not for lifted latch
Till the giant thews and sinews
Meet their Godlike overmatch.

XX

Read that riddle, scorning pity's
Tears, of cockatrices shed:
When the heart is vowed for freedom,
Captaincy it yields to head.

XXI

Meanwhile you, freaked nature's martyrs,
Honour's army, flower and weed,
Gentle ladies, wedded ladies,
See for you this fair one bleed.

XXII

Sole stood her offence, she faltered;
Prayed her lord the youth to spare;
Prayed that in the orange garden
She might lie, and ceased her prayer.

XXIII

Then commending to all women
Chastity, her breasts she laid
Bare unto the self-avenger.
Man in metal was the blade.

THE YOUNG PRINCESS

A BALLAD OF OLD LAWS OF LOVE

I

I

When the South sang like a nightingale
Above a bower in May,
The training of Love's vine of flame
Was writ in laws, for lord and dame
To say their yea and nay.

II

When the South sang like a nightingale
Across the flowering night,
And lord and dame held gentle sport,
There came a young princess to Court,
A frost of beauty white.

III

The South sang like a nightingale
To thaw her glittering dream:
No vine of Love her bosom gave,
She drank no wine of Love, but grave
She held them to Love's theme.

IV

The South grew all a nightingale
Beneath a moon unmoved:
Like the banner of war she led them on;
She left them to lie, like the light that has gone
From wine-cups overproved.

V

When the South was a fervid nightingale,
And she a chilling moon,
'T was pity to see on the garden swards,
Against Love's laws, those rival lords
As willow-wands lie strewn.

VI

The South had throat of a nightingale
For her, the young princess:
She gave no vine of Love to rear,
Love's wine drank not, yet bent her ear
To themes of Love no less.

II

I

The lords of the Court they sighed heart-sick,
Heart-free Lord Dusiote laughed:
I prize her no more than a fling o' the dice,
But, or shame to my manhood, a lady of ice,
We master her by craft!

II

Heart-sick the lords of joyance yawned,
Lord Dusiote laughed heart-free:
I count her as much as a crack o' my thumb,
But, or shame of my manhood, to me she shall come
Like the bird to roost in the tree!

III

At dead of night when the palace-guard
Had passed the measured rounds,
The young princess awoke to feel
A shudder of blood at the crackle of steel
Within the garden-bounds.

IV

It ceased, and she thought of whom was need,
The friar or the leech;
When lo, stood her tirewoman breathless by:
Lord Dusiote, madam, to death is nigh,
Of you he would have speech.

V

He prays you of your gentleness,
To light him to his dark end.
The princess rose, and forth she went,
For charity was her intent,
Devoutly to befriend.

VI

Lord Dusiote hung on his good squire's arm,
The priest beside him knelt:
A weeping handkerchief was pressed
To stay the red flood at his breast,
And bid cold ladies melt.

VII

O lady, though you are ice to men,
All pure to heaven as light
Within the dew within the flower,
Of you 't is whispered that love has power
When secret is the night.

VIII

I have silenced the slanderers, peace to their souls!
Save one was too cunning for me.
I die, whose love is late avowed,
He lives, who boasts the lily has bowed
To the oath of a bended knee.

IX

Lord Dusiote drew breath with pain,
And she with pain drew breath:
On him she looked, on his like above;
She flew in the folds of a marvel of love,
Revealed to pass to death.

X

You are dying, O great-hearted lord,
You are dying for me, she cried;
O take my hand, O take my kiss,
And take of your right for love like this,
The vow that plights me bride.

XI

She bade the priest recite his words
While hand in hand were they,
Lord Dusiote's soul to waft to bliss;
He had her hand, her vow, her kiss,
And his body was borne away.

III

I

Lord Dusiote sprang from priest and squire;
He gazed at her lighted room:
The laughter in his heart grew slack;
He knew not the force that pushed him back
From her and the morn in bloom.

II

Like a drowned man's length on the strong flood-tide,
Like the shade of a bird in the sun,
He fled from his lady whom he might claim
As ghost, and who made the daybeams flame
To scare what he had done.

III

There was grief at Court for one so gay,
Though he was a lord less keen
For training the vine than at vintage-press;
But in her soul the young princess
Believed that love had been.

IV

Lord Dusiote fled the Court and land,
He crossed the woeful seas,
Till his traitorous doing seemed clearer to burn,
And the lady beloved drew his heart for return,
Like the banner of war in the breeze.

V

He neared the palace, he spied the Court,
And music he heard, and they told
Of foreign lords arrived to bring
The nuptial gifts of a bridegroom king
To the princess grave and cold.

VI

The masque and the dance were cloud on wave,
And down the masque and the dance
Lord Dusiote stepped from dame to dame,
And to the young princess he came,
With a bow and a burning glance.

VII

Do you take a new husband to-morrow, lady?
She shrank as at prick of steel.
Must the first yield place to the second, he sighed.
Her eyes were like the grave that is wide
For the corpse from head to heel.

VIII

My lady, my love, that little hand
Has mine ringed fast in plight:
I bear for your lips a lawful thirst,
And as justly the second should follow the first,
I come to your door this night.

IX

If a ghost should come a ghost will go:
No more the lady said,
Save that ever when he in wrath began
To swear by the faith of a living man,
She answered him, You are dead.

IV

I

The soft night-wind went laden to death
With smell of the orange in flower;
The light leaves prattled to neighbour ears;
The bird of the passion sang over his tears;
The night named hour by hour.

II

Sang loud, sang low the rapturous bird
Till the yellow hour was nigh,
Behind the folds of a darker cloud:
He chuckled, he sobbed, alow, aloud;
The voice between earth and sky.

III

O will you, will you, women are weak;
The proudest are yielding mates
For a forward foot and a tongue of fire:
So thought Lord Dusiote's trusty squire,
At watch by the palace-gates.

IV

The song of the bird was wine in his blood,
And woman the odorous bloom:
His master's great adventure stirred
Within him to mingle the bloom and bird,
And morn ere its coming illume.

V

Beside him strangely a piece of the dark
Had moved, and the undertones
Of a priest in prayer, like a cavernous wave,
He heard, as were there a soul to save
For urgency now in the groans.

VI

No priest was hired for the play this night:
And the squire tossed head like a deer
At sniff of the tainted wind; he gazed
Where cresset-lamps in a door were raised,
Belike on a passing bier.

VII

All cloaked and masked, with naked blades,
That flashed of a judgement done,
The lords of the Court, from the palace-door,
Came issuing silently, bearers four,
And flat on their shoulders one.

VIII

They marched the body to squire and priest,
They lowered it sad to earth:
The priest they gave the burial dole,
Bade wrestle hourly for his soul,
Who was a lord of worth.

IX

One said, farewell to a gallant knight!
And one, but a restless ghost!
'T is a year and a day since in this place
He died, sped high by a lady of grace,
To join the blissful host.

X

Not vainly on us she charged her cause,
The lady whom we revere
For faith in the mask of a love untrue
To the Love we honour, the Love her due,
The Love we have vowed to rear.

XI

A trap for the sweet tooth, lures for the light,
For the fortress defiant a mine:
Right well! But not in the South, princess,
Shall the lady snared of her nobleness
Ever shamed or a captive pine.

XII

When the South had voice of a nightingale
Above a Maying bower,
On the heights of Love walked radiant peers;
The bird of the passion sang over his tears
To the breeze and the orange-flower.

KING HARALD'S TRANCE

I

Sword in length a reaping-hook amain
Harald sheared his field, blood up to shank:
'Mid the swathes of slain,
First at moonrise drank.

II

Thereof hunger, as for meats the knife,
Pricked his ribs, in one sharp spur to reach
Home and his young wife,
Nigh the sea-ford beach.

III

After battle keen to feed was he:
Smoking flesh the thresher washed down fast,
Like an angry sea
Ships from keel to mast.

IV

Name us glory, singer, name us pride
Matching Harald's in his deeds of strength;
Chiefs, wife, sword by side,
Foemen stretched their length!

V

Half a winter night the toasts hurrahed,
Crowned him, clothed him, trumpeted him high,
Till awink he bade
Wife to chamber fly.

VI

Twice the sun had mounted, twice had sunk,
Ere his ears took sound; he lay for dead;
Mountain on his trunk,
Ocean on his head.

VII

Clamped to couch, his fiery hearing sucked
Whispers that at heart made iron-clang:
Here fool-women clucked,
There men held harangue.

VIII

Burial to fit their lord of war,
They decreed him: hailed the kingling: ha!
Hateful! but this Thor
Failed a weak lamb's baa.

IX

King they hailed a branchlet, shaped to fare,
Weighted so, like quaking shingle spume,
When his blood's own heir
Ripened in the womb!

X

Still he heard, and doglike, hoglike, ran
Nose of hearing till his blind sight saw:
Woman stood with man
Mouthing low, at paw.

XI

Woman, man, they mouthed; they spake a thing
Armed to split a mountain, sunder seas:
Still the frozen king
Lay and felt him freeze.

XII

Doglike, hoglike, horselike now he raced,
Riderless, in ghost across a ground
Flint of breast, blank-faced,
Past the fleshly bound.

XIII

Smell of brine his nostrils filled with might:
Nostrils quickened eyelids, eyelids hand:
Hand for sword at right
Groped, the great haft spanned.

XIV

Wonder struck to ice his people's eyes:
Him they saw, the prone upon the bier,
Sheer from backbone rise,
Sword uplifting peer.

XV

Sitting did he breathe against the blade,
Standing kiss it for that proof of life:
Strode, as netters wade,
Straightway to his wife.

XVI

Her he eyed: his judgement was one word,
Foulbed! and she fell: the blow clove two.
Fearful for the third,
All their breath indrew.

XVII

Morning danced along the waves to beach;
Dumb his chiefs fetched breath for what might hap:
Glassily on each
Stared the iron cap.

XVIII

Sudden, as it were a monster oak
Split to yield a limb by stress of heat,
Strained he, staggered, broke
Doubled at their feet.

WHIMPER OF SYMPATHY

Hawk or shrike has done this deed
Of downy feathers : rueful sight!
Sweet sentimentalist, invite
Your bosom's Power to intercede.

So hard it seems that one must bleed
Because another needs will bite!
All round we find cold Nature slight
The feelings of the totter-knee'd.

O it were pleasant, with you
To fly from this tussle of foes,
The shambles, the charnel, the wrinkle!
To dwell in yon dribble of dew
On the cheek of your sovereign rose,
And live the young life of a twinkle.

YOUNG REYNARD

I

Gracefullest leaper, the dappled fox-cub
Curves over brambles with berries and buds,
Light as a bubble that flies from the tub,
Whisked by the laundry-wife out of her suds.
Wavy he comes, woolly, all at his ease,
Elegant, fashioned to foot with the deuce;
Nature's own prince of the dance: then he sees
Me, and retires as if making excuse.

II

Never closed minuet courtlier! Soon
Cub-hunting troops were abroad, and a yelp
Told of sure scent: ere the stroke upon noon
Reynard the younger lay far beyond help.
Wild, my poor friend, has the fate to be chased;
Civil will conquer: were 't other 't were worse,
Fair, by the flushed early morning embraced,
Haply you live a day longer in verse.

MANFRED

I

Projected from the bilious Childe,
This clatterjaw his foot could set
On Alps, without a breast beguiled
To glow in shedding rascal sweat.
Somewhere about his grinder teeth,
He mouthed of thoughts that grilled beneath,
And summoned Nature to her feud
With bile & buskin Attitude.

II

Considerably was the world
Of spinsterdom and clergy racked
While he his hinted horrors hurled,
And she pictorially attacked.
A duel hugeous. Tragic? Ho!
The cities, not the mountains, blow
Such bladders; in their shapes confessed
An after-dinner's indigest.

HERNANI

Cistercians might crack their sides
With laughter, and exemption get,
At sight of heroes clasping brides,
And hearing — O the horn! the horn!
The horn of their obstructive debt!

But quit the stage, that note applies
For sermons cosmopolitan,
Hernani. Have we filched our prize,
Forgetting . . . ? O the horn! the horn!
The horn of the Old Gentleman!

THE NUPTIALS OF ATTILA

I

Flat as to an eagle's eye,
Earth hung under Attila.
Sign for carnage gave he none.
In the peace of his disdain,
Sun and rain, and rain and sun,
Cherished men to wax again,
Crawl, and in their manner die.
On his people stood a frost.
Like the charger cut in stone,
Rearing stiff, the warrior host,
Which had life from him alone,
Craved the trumpet's eager note,
As the bridled earth the Spring.
Rusty was the trumpet's throat.
He let chief and prophet rave;
Venturous earth around him string
Threads of grass and slender rye,
Wave them, and untrampled wave.
O for the time when God did cry,
Eye and have, my Attila!

II

Scorn of conquest filled like sleep
Him that drank of havoc deep
When the Green Cat pawed the globe:
When the horsemen from his bow
Shot in sheaves and made the foe
Crimson fringes of a robe,
Trailed o'er towns and fields in woe;
When they streaked the rivers red,
When the saddle was the bed.
Attila, my Attila!

III

He breathed peace and pulled a flower.
Eye and have, my Attila!
This was the damsel Ildico,
Rich in bloom until that hour:
Shyer than the forest doe
Twinkling slim through branches green.
Yet the shyest shall be seen.
Make the bed for Attila!

IV

Seen of Attila, desired,
She was led to him straightway:
Radiantly was she attired;
Rifled lands were her array,
Jewels bled from weeping crowns,
Gold of woeful fields and towns.

She stood pallid in the light.
How she walked, how withered white,
From the blessing to the board,
She who should have proudly blushed
Women whispered, asking why,
Hinting of a youth, and hushed.
Was it terror of her lord?
Was she childish? was she sly?
Was it the bright mantle's dye
Drained her blood to hues of grief
Like the ash that shoots the spark?
See the green tree all in leaf:
See the green tree stripped of bark!—
Make the bed for Attila!

V

Round the banquet-table's load
Scores of iron horsemen rode;
Chosen warriors, keen and hard;
Grain of threshing battle-dints;
Attila's fierce body-guard,
Smelling war like fire in flints.
Grant them peace be fugitive!
Iron-capped and iron-heeled,
Each against his fellow's shield
Smote the spear-head, shouting, Live,
Attila! my Attila!
Eagle, eagle of our breed,
Eagle, beak the lamb, and feed!
Have her, and unleash us! live,
Attila! my Attila!

VI

He was of the blood to shine
Bronze in joy, like skies that scorch.
Beaming with the goblet wine
In the wavering of the torch,
Looked he backward on his bride.
Eye and have, my Attila!
Fair in her wide robe was she:
Where the robe and vest divide,
Fair she seemed surpassingly:
Soft, yet vivid as the stream
Danube rolls in the moonbeam
Through rock-barriers: but she smiled
Never, she sat cold as salt:
Open-mouthed as a young child
Wondering with a mind at fault.
Make the bed for Attila!

VII

Under the thin hoop of gold
Whence in waves her hair outrolled,
'Twixt her brows the women saw
Shadows of a vulture's claw
Gript in flight: strange knots that sped
Closing and dissolving aye:
Such as wicked dreams betray
When pale dawn creeps o'er the bed.
They might show the common pang
Known to virgins, in whom dread

Hunts their bliss like famished hounds;
While the chiefs with roaring rounds
Tossed her to her lord, and sang
Praise of him whose hand was large,
Cheers for beauty brought to yield,
Chirrups of the trot afield,
Hurrahs of the battle-charge.

VIII

Those rock-faces hung with weed
Reddened: their great days of speed,
Slaughter, triumph, flood and flame,
Like a jealous frenzy wrought,
Scoffed at them and did them shame,
Quaffing idle, conquering naught.
O for the time when God decreed
Earth the prey of Attila!
God called on thee in his wrath,
Trample it to mire! 'T was done.
Swift as Danube clove our path
Down from East to Western sun.
Huns! behold your pasture, gaze,
Take, our king said: heel to flank
(Whisper it, the warhorse neighs!)
Forth we drove, and blood we drank
Fresh as dawn-dew: earth was ours:
Men were flocks we lashed and spurned:
Fast as windy flame devours,
Flame along the wind, we burned.
Arrow, javelin, spear, and sword!
Here the snows and there the plains;

On! our signal: onward poured
Torrents of the tightened reins,
Foaming over vine and corn
Hot against the city-wall.
Whisper it, you sound a horn
To the grey beast in the stall!
Yea, he whinnies at a nod.
O for sound of the trumpet-notes!
O for the time when thunder-shod,
He that scarce can munch his oats,
Hung on the peaks, brooded aloof,
Champed the grain of the wrath of God,
Pressed a cloud on the cowering roof,
Snorted out of the blackness fire!
Scarlet broke the sky, and down,
Hammering West with print of his hoof,
He burst out of the bosom of ire
Sharp as eyelight under thy frown,
Attila, my Attila!

IX

Ravaged cities rolling smoke
Thick on cornfields dry and black,
Wave his banners, bear his yoke.
Track the lightning, and you track
Attila. They moan: 't is he!
Bleed: 't is he! Beneath his foot
Leagues are deserts charred and mute;
Where he passed, there passed a sea.
Attila, my Attila!

X

— Who breathed on the king cold breath?
Said a voice amid the host,
He is Death that weds a ghost,
Else a ghost that weds with Death?
Ildico's chill little hand
Shuddering he beheld: austere
Stared, as one who would command
Sight of what has filled his ear:
Plucked his thin beard, laughed disdain.
Feast, ye Huns! His arm he raised,
Like the warrior, battle-dazed,
Joining to the fight amain.
Make the bed for Attila!

XI

Silent Ildico stood up.
King and chief to pledge her well,
Shocked sword sword and cup on cup,
Clamouring like a brazen bell.
Silent stepped the queenly slave.
Fair, by heaven! she was to meet
On a midnight, near a grave,
Flapping wide the winding-sheet.

XII

Death and she walked through the crowd,
Out beyond the flush of light.
Ceremonious women bowed
Following her: 't was middle night.

Then the warriors each on each
Spied, nor overloudly laughed;
Like the victims of the leech,
Who have drunk of a strange draught.

XIII

Attila remained. Even so
Frowned he when he struck the blow,
Brained his horse that stumbled twice,
On a bloody day in Gaul,
Bellowing, Perish omens! All
Marvelled at the sacrifice,
But the battle, swinging dim,
Rang off that axe-blow for him.
Attila, my Attila!

XIV

Brightening over Danube wheeled
Star by star; and she, most fair,
Sweet as victory half-revealed,
Seized to make him glad and young;
She, O sweet as the dark sign
Given him oft in battles gone,
When the voice within said, Dare!
And the trumpet-notes were sprung
Rapturous for the charge in line:
She lay waiting: fair as dawn
Wrapped in folds of night she lay;
Secret, lustrous; flaglike there,

Waiting him to stream and ray,
With one loosening blush outflung,
Colours of his hordes of horse
Ranked for combat: still he hung
Like the fever dreading air,
Cursed of heat; and as a corse
Gathers vultures, in his brain
Images of her eyes and kiss
Plucked at the limbs that could remain
Loitering nigh the doors of bliss.
Make the bed for Attila!

XV

Passion on one hand, on one,
Destiny led forth the Hun.
Heard ye outcries of affright,
Voices that through many a fray,
In the press of flag and spear,
Warned the king of peril near?
Men were dumb, they gave him way,
Eager heads to left and right,
Like the bearded standard, thrust,
As in battle, for a nod
From their lord of battle-dust.
Attila, my Attila!
Slow between the lines he trod.
Saw ye not the sun drop slow
On this nuptial day, ere eve
Pierced him on the couch aglow?
Attila, my Attila!
Here and there his heart would cleave

Clotted memory for a space:
Some stout chief's familiar face,
Choicest of his fighting brood,
Touched him, as 't were one to know
Ere he met his bride's embrace.
Attila, my Attila!
Twisting fingers in a beard
Scant as winter underwood,
With a narrowed eye he peered;
Like the sunset's graver red
Up old pine-stems. Grave he stood
Eyeing them on whom was shed
Burning light from him alone.
Attila, my Attila!
Red were they whose mouths recalled
Where the slaughter mounted high,
High on it, o'er earth appalled,
He; heaven's finger in their sight
Raising him on waves of dead:
Up to heaven his trumpets blown.
O for the time when God's delight
Crowned the head of Attila!
Hungry river of the crag
Stretching hands for earth he came:
Force and Speed astride his name
Pointed back to spear and flag.
He came out of miracle cloud,
Lightning-swift and spectre-lean.
Now those days are in a shroud:
Have him to his ghostly queen.
Make the bed for Attila!

XVI

One, with winecups overstrung,
Cried him farewell in Rome's tongue.
Who? for the great king turned as though
Wrath to the shaft's head strained the bow.
Nay, not wrath the king possessed,
But a radiance of the breast.
In that sound he had the key
Of his cunning malady.
Lo, where gleamed the sapphire lake,
Leo, with his Rome at stake,
Drew blank air to hues and forms;
Whereof Two that shone distinct,
Linked as orbed stars are linked,
Clear among the myriad swarms,
In a constellation, dashed
Full on horse and rider's eyes
Sunless light, but light it was —
Light that blinded and abashed,
Froze his members, bade him pause,
Caught him mid-gallop, blazed him home.
Attila, my Attila!
What are streams that cease to flow?
What was Attila, rolled thence,
Cheated by a juggler's show?
Like that lake of blue intense,
Under tempest lashed to foam,
Lurid radiance, as he passed,
Filled him, and around was glassed,
When deep-voiced he uttered, Rome!

XVII

Rome! the word was: and like meat
Flung to dogs the word was torn.
Soon Rome's magic priests shall bleat
Round their magic Pope forlorn!
Loud they swore the king had sworn
Vengeance on the Roman cheat,
Ere he passed as, grave and still,
Danube through the shouting hill:
Sworn it by his naked life!
Eagle, snakes these women are:
Take them on the wing! but war,
Smoking war 's the warrior's wife!
Then for plunder! then for brides
Won without a winking priest!—
Danube whirled his train of tides
Black toward the yellow East.
Make the bed for Attila!

XVIII

Chirrups of the trot afield,
Hurrahs of the battle-charge,
How they answered, how they pealed,
When the morning rose and drew
Bow and javelin, lance and targe,
In the nuptial casement's view!
Attila, my Attila!
Down the hillspurs, out of tents
Glimmering in mid-forest, through
Mists of the cool morning scents,

Forth from city-alley, court,
Arch, the bounding horsemen flew,
Joined along the plains of dew,
Raced and gave the rein to sport,
Closed and streamed like curtain-rents
Fluttered by a wind, and flowed
Into squadrons: trumpets blew,
Chargers neighed, and trappings glowed
Brave as the bright Orient's.
Look on the seas that run to greet
Sunrise: look on the leagues of wheat:
Look on the lines and squares that fret
Leaping to level the lance blood-wet.
Tens of thousands, man and steed,
Tossing like field-flowers in Spring;
Ready to be hurled at need
Whither their great lord may sling.
Finger Romeward, Romeward, King!
Attila, my Attila!
Still the woman holds him fast
As a night-flag round the mast.

XIX

Nigh upon the fiery noon,
Out of ranks a roaring burst.
'Ware white women like the moon!
They are poison: they have thirst
First for love, and next for rule.
Jealous of the army, she?
Ho, the little wanton fool!

We were his before she squealed
Blind for mother's milk, and heeled
Kicking on her mother's knee.
His in life and death are we:
She but one flower of a field.
We have given him bliss tenfold
In an hour to match her night:
Attila, my Attila!
Still her arms the master hold,
As on wounds the scarf winds tight.

XX

Over Danube day no more,
Like the warrior's planted spear,
Stood to hail the King: in fear
Western day knocked at his door.
Attila, my Attila!
Sudden in the army's eyes
Rolled a blast of lights and cries:
Flashing through them: Dead are ye!
Dead, ye Huns, and torn piecemeal!
See the ordered army reel
Stricken through the ribs: and see,
Wild for speed to cheat despair,
Horsemen, clutching knee to chin,
Crouch and dart they know not where.
Attila, my Attila!
Faces covered, faces bare,
Light the palace-front like jets
Of a dreadful fire within.

Beating hands and driving hair
Start on roof and parapets.
Dust rolls up; the slaughter din.
— Death to them who call him dead!
Death to them who doubt the tale!
Choking in his dusty veil,
Sank the sun on his death-bed.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXI

'T is the room where thunder sleeps.
Frenzy, as a wave to shore
Surging, burst the silent door,
And drew back to awful deeps,
Breath beaten out, foam-white. Anew
Howled and pressed the ghastly crew,
Like storm-waters over rocks.
Attila, my Attila!
One long shaft of sunset red
Laid a finger on the bed.
Horror, with the snaky locks,
Shocked the surge to stiffened heaps,
Hoary as the glacier's head
Faced to the moon. Insane they look.
God it is in heaven who weeps
Fallen from his hand the Scourge he shook.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXII

Square along the couch, and stark,
Like the sea-rejected thing
Sea-sucked white, behold their King.
Attila, my Attila!
Beams that panted black and bright,
Scornful lightnings danced their sight:
Him they see an oak in bud,
Him an oaklog stripped of bark:
Him, their lord of day and night,
White, and lifting up his blood
Dumb for vengeance. Name us that,
Huddled in the corner dark,
Humped and grinning like a cat,
Teeth for lips! — 't is she! she stares,
Glittering through her bristled hairs.
Rend her! Pierce her to the hilt!
She is Murder: have her out!
What! this little fist, as big
As the southern summer fig!
She is Madness, none may doubt.
Death, who dares deny her guilt!
Death, who says his blood she spilt!
Make the bed for Attila!

XXIII

Torch and lamp and sunset-red
Fell three-fingered on the bed.
In the torch the beard-hair scant
With the great breast seemed to pant:

In the yellow lamp the limbs
Wavered, as the lake-flower swims:
In the sunset red the dead
Dead avowed him, dry blood-red.

XXIV

Hatred of that abject slave,
Earth, was in each chieftain's heart.
Earth has got him, whom God gave,
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!
Attila, my Attila!

XXV

Thus their prayer was raved and ceased.
Then had Vengeance of her feast
Scent in their quick pang to smite
Which they knew not, but huge pain
Urged them for some victim slain
Swift, and blotted from the sight.
Each at each, a crouching beast,
Glared, and quivered for the word.
Each at each, and all on that,
Humped and grinning like a cat,
Head-bound with its bridal-wreath
Then the bitter chamber heard
Vengeance in a cauldron seethe.
Hurried counsel rage and craft
Yelped to hungry men, whose teeth
Hard the grey lip-ringlet gnawed,
Gleaming till their fury laughed.

With the steel-hilt in the clutch,
Eyes were shot on her that froze
In their blood-thirst overawed;
Burned to rend, yet feared to touch.
She that was his nuptial rose,
She was of his heart's blood clad:
Oh! the last of him she had! —
Could a little fist as big
As the southern summer fig,
Push a dagger's point to pierce
Ribs like those? Who else! They glared
Each at each. Suspicion fierce
Many a black remembrance bared.
Attila, my Attila!
Death, who dares deny her guilt!
Death, who says his blood she spilt!
Traitor he, who stands between!
Swift to hell, who harms the Queen!
She, the wild contention's cause,
Combed her hair with quiet paws.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVI

Night was on the host in arms.
Night, as never night before,
Hearkened to an army's roar
Breaking up in snaky swarms:
Torch and steel and snorting steed,
Hunted by the cry of blood,
Cursed with blindness, mad for day.

Where the torches ran a flood,
Tales of him and of the deed
Showered like a torrent spray.
Fear of silence made them strive
Loud in warrior-hymns that grew
Hoarse for slaughter yet unwreaked.
Ghostly Night across the hive,
With a crimson finger drew
Letters on her breast and shrieked.
Night was on them like the mould
On the buried half alive.
Night, their bloody Queen, her fold
Wound on them and struck them through.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVII

Earth has got him whom God gave,
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!
None of earth shall know his grave.
They that dig with Death depart.
Attila, my Attila!

XXVIII

Thus their prayer was raved and passed:
Passed in peace their red sunset:
Hewn and earthed those men of sweat
Who had housed him in the vast,
Where no mortal might declare,
There lies he — his end was there!
Attila, my Attila!

XXIX

Kingless was the army left:
Of its head the race bereft.
Every fury of the pit
Tortured and dismembered it.
Lo, upon a silent hour,
When the pitch of frost subsides,
Danube with a shout of power
Loosens his imprisoned tides:
Wide around the frighted plains
Shake to hear his riven chains,
Dreadfuller than heaven in wrath,
As he makes himself a path:
High leap the ice-cracks, towering pile
Floes to bergs, and giant peers
Wrestle on a drifted isle;
Island on ice-island rears;
Dissolution battles fast:
Big the senseless Titans loom,
Through a mist of common doom
Striving which shall die the last:
Till a gentle-breathing morn
Frees the stream from bank to bank.
So the Empire built of scorn
Agonized, dissolved and sank.
Of the Queen no more was told
Than of leaf on Danube rolled.
Make the bed for Attila!

ANEURIN'S HARP

I

Prince of Bards was old Aneurin;
He the grand Gododin sang;
All his numbers threw such fire in,
Struck his harp so wild a twang;—
Still the wakeful Briton borrows
Wisdom from its ancient heat:
Still it haunts our source of sorrows,
Deep excess of liquor sweet!

II

Here the Briton, there the Saxon,
Face to face, three fields apart,
Thirst for light to lay their thwacks on
Each the other with good heart.
Dry the Saxon sits, 'mid dinful
Noise of iron knits his steel:
Fresh and roaring with a skinful,
Britons round the hirlas reel.

III

Yellow flamed the meady sunset;
Red runs up the flag of morn.
Signal for the British onset
Hiccups through the British horn.
Down these hillmen pour like cattle
Sniffing pasture: grim below,
Showing eager teeth of battle,
In his spear-heads lies the foe.

IV

— Monster of the sea! we drive him
Back into his hungry brine.
— You shall lodge him, feed him, wive him.
Look on us; we stand in line.
— Pale sea-monster! foul the waters
Cast him; foul he leaves our land.
— You shall yield us land and daughters:
Stay the tongue, and try the hand.

V

Swift as torrent-streams our warriors,
Tossing torrent lights, find way;
Burst the ridges, crowd the barriers,
Pierce them where the spear-heads play;
Turn them as the clods in furrow,
Top them like the leaping foam;
Sorrow to the mother, sorrow,
Sorrow to the wife at home!

VI

Stags, they butted; bulls, they bellowed;
Hounds, we baited them; oh, brave!
Every second man, unfellowed,
Took the strokes of two, and gave.
Bare as hop-stakes in November's
Mists they met our battle-flood:
Hoary-red as Winter's embers
Lay their dead lines done in blood.

VII

Thou, my Bard, didst hang thy lyre in
Oak-leaves, and with crimson brand
Rhythmic fury spent, Aneurin;
Songs the churls could understand:
Thrumming on their Saxon sconces
Straight, the invariable blow,
Till they snorted true responses.
Ever thus the Bard they know!

VIII

But ere nightfall, harper lusty!
When the sun was like a ball
Dropping on the battle dusty,
What was yon discordant call?
Cambria's old metheglin demon
Breathed against our rushing tide;
Clove us midst the threshing seamen:—
Gashed, we saw our ranks divide!

IX

Britain then with valedictory
Shriek veiled off her face and knelt.
Full of liquor, full of victory,
Chief on chief old vengeance dealt.
Backward swung their hurly-burly;
None but dead men kept the fight.
They that drink their cup too early,
Darkness they shall see ere night.

X

Loud we heard the yellow rover
Laugh to sleep, while we raged thick,
Thick as ants the ant-hill over,
Asking who has thrust the stick.
Lo, as frogs that Winter cumbers
Meet the Spring with stiffen'd yawn,
We from our hard night of slumbers,
Marched into the bloody dawn.

XI

Day on day we fought, though shattered;
Pushed and met repulses sharp,
Till our Raven's plumes were scattered:
All, save old Aneurin's harp.
Hear it wailing like a mother
O'er the strings of children slain!
He in one tongue, in another,
Alien, I; one blood, yet twain.

XII

Old Aneurin! droop no longer.
That squat ocean-scum, we own,
Had fine stoutness, made us stronger,
Brought us much-required backbone:
Claimed of Power their dues, and granted
Dues to Power in turn, when rose
Mightier rovers; they that planted
Sovereign here the Norman nose.

XIII

Glorious men, with heads of eagles,
Chopping arms, and cupboard lips;
Warriors, hunters, keen as beagles,
Mounted aye on horse or ships.
Active, being hungry creatures;
Silent, having nought to say:
High they raised the lord of features,
Saxon-worshipped to this day.

XIV

Hear its deeds, the great recital!
Stout as bergs of Arctic ice
Once it led, and lived; a title
Now it is, and names its price.
This our Saxon brothers cherish:
This, when by the worth of wits
Lands are reared aloft, or perish,
Sole illumes their lucre-pits.

XV

Know we not our wrongs, unwritten
Though they be, Aneurin? Sword,
Song, and subtle mind, the Briton
Brings to market, all ignored.
'Gainst the Saxon's bone impinging,
Still is our Gododin played;
Shamed we see him humbly cringing
In a shadowy nose's shade.

XVI

Bitter is the weight that crushes
Low, my Bard, thy race of fire.
Here no fair young future blushes
Bridal to a man's desire.
Neither chief, nor aim, nor splendour
Dressing distance, we perceive.
Neither honour, nor the tender
Bloom of promise, morn or eve.

XVII

Joined we are; a tide of races
Rolled to meet a common fate;
England clasps in her embraces
Many: what is England's state?
England her distended middle
Thumps with pride as Mammon's wife;
Says that thus she reads thy riddle,
Heaven! 't is heaven to plump her life.

XVIII

O my Bard! a yellow liquor,
Like to that we drank of old —
Gold is her metheglin beaker,
She destruction drinks in gold.
Warn her, Bard, that Power is pressing
Hotly for his dues this hour;
Tell her that no drunken blessing
Stops the onward march of Power.

XIX

Has she ears to take forewarnings
She will cleanse her of her stains,
Feed and speed for braver mornings
Valorously the growth of brains.
Power, the hard man knit for action,
Reads each nation on the brow.
Cripple, fool, and petrifaction,
Fall to him — are falling now!

MEN AND MAN

I

Men the Angels eyed;
And here they were wild waves,
And there as marsh descried,
Men the Angels eyed,
And liked the picture best
Where they were greenly dressed
In brotherhood of graves.

II

Man the Angels marked:
He led a host through murk,
On fearful seas embarked,
Man the Angels marked;
To think without a nay,
That he was good as they,
And help him at his work.

III

Man and Angels, ye
A sluggish fen shall drain,
Shall quell a warring sea.
Man and Angels, ye,
Whom stain of strife befouls,
A light to kindle souls
Bear radiant in the stain.

THE LAST CONTENTION

I

Young captain of a crazy bark!
O tameless heart in battered frame!
Thy sailing orders have a mark,
And hers is not the name.

II

For action all thine iron clanks
In cravings for a splendid prize;
Again to race or bump thy planks
With any flag that flies.

III

Consult them; they are eloquent
For senses not inebriate.
They trust thee on the star intent,
That leads to land their freight.

IV

And they have known thee high peruse
The heavens, and deep the earth, till thou
Didst into the flushed circle cruise
Where reason quits the brow.

V

Thou animatest ancient tales,
To prove our world of linear seed:
Thy very virtue now assails,
A tempter to mislead.

VI

But thou hast answer: I am I;
My passion hallows, bids command:
And she is gracious, she is nigh:
One motion of the hand!

VII

It will suffice; a whirly tune
These winds will pipe, and thou perform
The nodded part of pantaloon
In thy created storm.

VIII

Admires thee Nature with much pride;
She clasps thee for a gift of morn,
Till thou art set against the tide,
And then beware her scorn.

IX

Sad issue, should that strife befall
Between thy mortal ship and thee!
It writes the melancholy scrawl!
Of wreckage over sea.

X

This lady of the luting tongue,
The flash in darkness, billow's grace,
For thee the worship; for the young
In muscle the embrace.

XI

Soar on thy manhood clear from those
Whose toothless Winter claws at May,
And take her as the vein of rose
Athwart an evening grey.

PERIANDER

I

How died Melissa none dares shape in words.
A woman who is wife despotic lords
Count faggot at the question, Shall she live!
Her son, because his brows were black of her,
Runs barking for his bread, a fugitive,
And Corinth frowns on them that feed the cur.

II

There is no Corinth save the whip and curb
Of Corinth, high Periander; the superb
In magnanimity, in rule severe.
Up on his marble fortress-tower he sits,
The city under him: a white yoked steer,
That bears his heart for pulse, his head for wits.

III

Bloom of the generous fires of his fair Spring
Still coloured him when men forbore to sting;
Admiring meekly where the ordered seeds
Of his good sovereignty showed gardens trim;
And owning that the hoe he struck at weeds
Was author of the flowers raised face to him.

IV

His Corinth, to each mood subservient
In homage, made he as an instrument
To yield him music with scarce touch of stops.
He breathed, it piped; he moved, it rose to fly:
At whiles a bloodhorse racing till it drops;
At whiles a crouching dog, on him all eye.

V

His wisdom men acknowledged; only one,
The creature, issue of him, Lycophron,
That rebel with his mother in his brows,
Contested: such an infamous would foul
Pirene! Little heed where he might house
The prince gave, hearing: so the fox, the owl!

VI

To prove the Gods benignant to his rule,
The years, which fasten rigid whom they cool,
Reviewing, saw him hold the seat of power.
A grey one asked: Who next? nor answer had:
One greyer pointed on the pallid hour
To come: a river dried of waters glad.

VII

For which of his male issue promised grip
To stride yon people, with the curb and whip?
This Lycophron! he sole, the father like,
Fired prospect of a line in one strong tide,
By right of mastery; stern will to strike;
Pride to support the stroke: yea, Godlike pride!

VIII

Himself the prince beheld a failing fount.
His line stretched back unto its holy mount:
The thirsty onward waved for him no sign.
Then stood before his vision that hard son.
The seizure of a passion for his line
Impelled him to the path of Lycophron.

IX

The youth was tossing pebbles in the sea;
A figure shunned along the busy quay,
Perforce of the harsh edict for who dared
Address him outcast. Naming it, he crossed
His father's look with look that proved them paired
For stiffness, and another pebble tossed.

X

An exile to the Island ere nightfall
He passed from sight, from the hushed mouths of all.
It had resemblance to a death: and on,
Against a coast where sapphire shattered white,
The seasons rolled like troops of billows blown
To spraymist. The prince gazed on capping night.

XI

Deaf Age spake in his ear with shouts: Thy son!
Deep from his heart Life raved of work not done.
He heard historic echoes moan his name,
As of the prince in whom the race had pause;
Till Tyranny paternity became,
And him he hated loved he for the cause.

XII

Not Lycophron the exile now appeared,
But young Periander, from the shadow cleared,
That haunted his rebellious brows. The prince
Grew bright for him; saw youth, if seeming loth,
Return: and of pure pardon to convince,
Despatched the messenger most dear with both.

XIII

His daughter, from the exile's Island home,
Wrote, as a flight of halcyons o'er the foam,
Sweet words: her brother to his father bowed;
Accepted his peace-offering, and rejoiced.
To bring him back a prince the father vowed,
Commanded man the oars, the white sails hoist.

XIV

He waved the fleet to strain its westward way
On to the sea-hued hills that crown the bay:
Soil of those hospitable islanders
Whom now his heart, for honour to his blood,
Thanked. They should learn what boons a prince confers
When happiness enjoins him gratitude!

XV

In watch upon the offing, worn with haste
To see his youth revived, and, close embraced,
Pardon who had subdued him, who had gained
Surely the stoutest battle between two
Since Titan pierced by young Apollo stained
Earth's breast, the prince looked forth, himself looked through.

XVI

Errors aforetime unperceived were bared,
To be by his young masterful repaired:
Renewed his great ideas gone to smoke;
His policy confirmed amid the surge
Of States and people fretting at his yoke.
And lo, the fleet brown-flocked on the sea-verge!

XVII

Oars pulled: they streamed in harbour; without cheer
For welcome shadowed round the heaving bier.
They, whose approach in such rare pomp and stress
Of numbers the free islanders dismayed
At Tyranny come maskiug to oppress,
Found Lycophron this breathless, this lone-laid.

XVIII

Who smote the man thrown open to young joy?
The image of the mother of his boy
Came forth from his unwary breast in wreaths,
With eyes. And shall a woman, that extinct,
Smite out of dust the Powerful who breathes?
Her loved the son; her served; they lay close-linked!

XIX

Dead was he, and demanding earth. Demand
Sharper for vengeance of an instant hand,
The Tyrant in the father heard him cry,
And raged a plague; to prove on free Hellenes
How prompt the Tyrant for the Persian dye;
How black his Gods behind their marble screens.

SOLON

I

The Tyrant passed, and friendlier was his eye
On the great man of Athens, whom for foe
He knew, than on the sycophantic fry
That broke as waters round a galley's flow,
Bubbles at prow and foam along the wake.
Solidity the Thunderer could not shake,
Beneath an adverse wind still stripping bare,
His kinsman, of the light-in-cavern look,
From thought drew, and a countenance could wear
Not less at peace than fields in Attic air
Shorn, and shown fruitful by the reaper's hook.

II

Most enviable so; yet much insane
To deem of minds of men they grow! these sheep,
By fits wild horses, need the crook and rein;
Hot bulls by fits, pure wisdom hold they cheap,
My Lawgiver, when fiery is the mood.
For ones and twos and threes thy words are good;
For thine own government are pillars: mine

Stand acts to fit the herd; which has quick thirst,
Rejecting elegiacs, though they shine
On polished brass, and, worthy of the Nine,
In showering columns from their fountain burst.

III

Thus museful rode the Tyrant, princely plumed,
To his high seat upon the sacred rock:
And Solon, blank beside his rule, resumed
The meditation which that passing mock
Had buffeted awhile to sallowness.
He little loved the man, his office less,
Yet owned him for a flower of his kind.
Therefore the heavier curse on Athens he!
The people grew not in themselves, but blind,
Accepted sight from him, to him resigned
Their hopes of stature, rootless as at sea.

IV

As under sea lay Solon's work, or seemed
By turbid shore-waves beaten day by day;
Defaced, half-formless, like an image dreamed,
Or child that fashioned in another clay
Appears, by strangers' hands to home returned.
But shall the Present tyrannize us? earned
It was in some way, justly says the sage.
One sees not how, while husbanding regrets;
While tossing scorn abroad from righteous rage,
High vision is obscured; for this is age
When robbed — more infant than the babe it frets!

V

Yet see Athenians treading the black path
Laid by a prince's shadow! well content
To wait his pleasure, shivering at his wrath:
They bow to their accepted Orient
With offer of the all that renders bright:
Forgetful of the growth of men to light,
As creatures reared on Persian milk they bow.
Unripe! unripe! The times are overcast.
But still may they who sowed behind the plough
True seed fix in the mind an unborn Now
To make the plagues afflicting us things past.

BELLEROPHON.

I

Maimed, beggared, grey; seeking an alms; with nod
Of palsy doing task of thanks for bread;
Upon the stature of a God,
He whom the Gods have struck bends low his head.

II

Weak words he has, that slip the nerveless tongue
Deformed, like his great frame: a broken arc:
Once radiant as the javelin flung
Right at the centre breastplate of his mark.

III

Oft pausing on his white-eyed inward look,
Some undermountain narrative he tells,
As gapped by Lykian heat the brook
Cut from the source that in the upland swells.

IV

The cottagers who dole him fruit and crust,
With patient inattention hear him prate:
And comes the snow, and comes the dust,
Comes the old wanderer, more bent of late.

V

A crazy beggar grateful for a meal
Has ever of himself a world to say.
For them he is an ancient wheel
Spinning a knotted thread the livelong day.

VI

He cannot, nor do they, the tale connect;
For never singer in the land had been
Who him for theme did not reject:
Spurned of the hoof that sprang the Hippocrene.

VII

Albeit a theme of flame to bring them straight
The snorting white-winged brother of the wave,
They hear him as a thing by fate
Cursed in unholy babble to his grave.

VIII

As men that spied the wings, that heard the snort,
Their sires have told; and of a martial prince
Bestriding him; and old report
Speaks of a monster slain by one long since.

IX

There is that story of the golden bit
By Goddess given to tame the lightning steed:
A mortal who could mount, and sit
Flying, and up Olympus midway speed.

X

He rose like the loosed fountain's utmost leap;
He played the star at span of heaven right o'er
Men's heads: they saw the snowy steep,
Saw the winged shoulders: him they saw not more

XI

He fell: and says the shattered man, I fell:
And sweeps an arm the height an eagle wins;
And in his breast a mouthless well
Heaves the worn patches of his coat of skins.

XII

Lo, this is he in whom the surgent springs
Of recollections richer than our skies
To feed the flow of tuneful strings,
Show but a pool of scum for shooting flies.

PHAÉTHÔN.

ATTEMPTED IN THE GALLIAMBIC MEASURE.

At the coming up of Phoebus the all-luminous charioteer,
Double-visaged stand the mountains in imperial multitudes,
And with shadows dappled men sing to him, Hail, O Beneficent!
For they shudder chill, the earth-vales, at his clouding, shudder to black;
In the light of him there is music thro' the poplar and river-sedge,
Renovation, chirp of brooks, hum of the forest — an ocean-song.
Never pearl from ocean-hollows by the diver exultingly,
In his breathlessness, above thrust, is as earth to Helios.
Who usurps his place there, rashest? Aphrodite's loved one it is!
To his son the flaming Sun-God, to the tender youth, Phaethon,
Rule of day this day surrenders as a thing hereditary,
Having sworn by Styx tremendous, for the proof of his parentage,
He would grant his son's petition, whatsoever the sign thereof.

Then, rejoiced, the stripling answered: 'Rule of day give me; give it me,
'Give me place that men may see me how I blaze, and transcendingly,
'I, divine, proclaim my birthright.' Darkened Helios, and his utterance
Choked prophetic: 'O half mortal!' he exclaimed in an agony,
'O lost son of mine! lost son! No! put a prayer for another thing:
'Not for this: insane to wish it, and to crave the gift impious!
'Cannot other gifts my godhead shed upon thee? miraculous
'Mighty gifts to prove a blessing, that to earth thou shalt be a joy?
'Gifts of healing, wherewith men walk as the Gods beneficently;
'As a God to sway to concord hearts of men, reconciling them;
'Gifts of verse, the lyre, the laurel, therewithal that thine origin
'Shall be known even as when *I* strike on the string'd shell with melody,
'And the golden notes, like medicine, darting straight to the cavities,
'Fill them up, till hearts of men bound as the billows, the ships thereon.'
Thus intently urged the Sun-God; but the force of his eloquence
Was the pressing on of sea-waves scattered broad from the rocks away.

What shall move a soul from madness? Lost, lost in delirium,
Rock-fast, the adolescent to his father, irreverent,
'By the oath! the oath! thine oath!' cried. The effulgent foreseër then,
Quivering in his loins parental, on the boy's beaming countenance
Looked and moaned, and urged him for love's sake, for sweet life's sake, to yield the claim,
To abandon his mad hunger, and avert the calamity.
But he, vehement, passionate, called out: 'Let me show I am what I say,
'That the taunts I hear be silenced: I am stung with their whispering.
'Only, Thou, my Father, Thou tell how aloft the revolving wheels,
'How aloft the cleaving horse-crests I may guide peremptorily,
'Till I drink the shadows, fire-hot, like a flower celestial,
'And my fellows see me curbing the fierce steeds, the dear dew-drinkers:
'Yea, for this I gaze on life's light; throw for this any sacrifice.'

All the end foreseeing, Phoebus, to his oath irrevocable,
Bowed obedient, deploring the insanity pitiless.
Then the flame-outsnorting horses were led forth: it was so decreed.
They were yoked before the glad youth by his sister-ancillaries.
Swift the ripple ripples follow'd, as of aureate Helicon,

Down their flanks, while they impatient pawed desire of the distances,
And the bit with fury champed. Oh! unimaginable delight!
Unimagined speed and splendour in the circle of upper air!
Glory grander than the armed host upon earth singing victory!
Chafed the youth with their spirit súrcharged, as when blossom is shaken by winds,
Marked that labour by his sister Phaethontiades finished, quick
On the slope of the car his forefoot set assured: and the morning rose:
Seeing whom, and what a day dawned, stood the God, as in harvest fields,
When the reaper grasps the full sheaf and the sickle that severs it:
Hugged the withered head with one hand, with the other, to indicate
(If this woe might be averted, this immeasurable evil),
Laid the kindling course in view, told how the reins to manipulate:
Named the horses fondly, fearful, caution'd urgently betweenwhiles:
Their diverging tempers dwelt on, and their wantonness, wickedness,
That the voice of Gods alone held in restraint; but the voice of Gods;
None but Gods can curb. He spake: vain were the words: scarcely listening,
Mounted Phaethon, swinging reins loose, and, 'Behold me, companions,

'It is I here, I!' he shouted, glancing down with supremacy;
'Not to any of you was this gift granted ever in annals of men;
'I alone what only Gods can, I alone am governing day!'
Short the triumph, brief his rapture: see a hurricane suddenly
Beat the lifting billow crestless, roll it broken this way and that;—
At the leap on yielding ether, in despite of his reprimand,
Swayed tumultuous the fire-steeds, plunging reckless hither and yon;
Unto men a great amazement, all agaze at the Troubled East:—
Pitifully for mastery striving in ascension, the charioteer,
Reminiscent, drifts of counsel caught confused in his arid wits;
The reins stiff ahind his shoulder madly pulled for the mastery,
Till a thunder off the tense chords thro' his ears dinnèd horrible.
Panic seized him: fled his vision of inviolability;
Fled the dream that he of mortals rode mischances predominant;
And he cried, 'Had I petitioned for a cup of chill aconite,
'My descent to awful Hades had been soft, for now must I go
'With the curse by father Zeus cast on ambition immoderate.
'Oh, my sisters! Thou, my Goddess, in whose love I was enviable,
'From whose arms I rushed befrenzied, what a wreck will this body be,

'That admired of thee stood rose-warm in the courts where thy mysteries
'Celebration had from me, me the most splendidly privileged!
'Never more shall I thy temple fill with incenses bewildering;
'Not again hear thy half-murmurs — I am lost! — never, never more.
'I am wrecked on seas of air, hurled to my death in a vessel of flame!
'Hither, sisters! Father, save me! Hither, succour me, Cypria!'

Now a wail of men to Zeus rang: from Olympus the Thunderer
Saw the rage of the havoc wide-mouthed, the bright car superimpending
Over Asia, Africa, low down; ruin flaming over the vales;
Light disastrous rising savage out of smoke inveterately;
Beast-black, conflagration like a menacing shadow move
With voracious roaring southward, where aslant, insufferable,
The bright steeds careered their parched way down an arc of the firmament.
For the day grew like to thick night, and the orb was its beacon-fire,
And from hill to hill of darkness burst the day's apparition forth.
Lo, a wrestler, not a God, stood in the chariot ever lowering:
Lo, the shape of one who raced there to outstrip the legitimate hours:

Lo, the ravish'd beams of Phoebus dragged in shame at the chariot-wheels:
Light of days of happy pipings by the mead-singing rivulets!
Lo, lo, increasing lustre, torrid breath to the nostrils; lo,
Torrid brilliancies thro' the vapours lighten swifter, penetrate them,
Fasten merciless, ruminant, hueless, on earth's frame crackling busily.
He aloft, the frenzied driver, in the glow of the universe,
Like the paling of the dawn-star withers visibly, he aloft:
Bitter fury in his aspect, bitter death in the heart of him.
Crouch the herds, contract the reptiles, crouch the lions under their paws.
White as metal in the furnace are the faces of humankind:
Inarticulate creatures of earth, dumb all await the ultimate shock.

To the bolt he launched, 'Strike dead, thou,' uttered Zeus, very terrible;
'Perish folly, else 'tis man's fate'; and the bolt flew unerringly.
Then the kindler stooped; from the torch-car down the measureless altitudes
Leaned his rayless head, relinquished rein and footing, raised not a cry.
Like the flower on the river's surface when expanding it vanishes,
Gave his limbs to right and left, quenched: and so fell he precipitate,

Seen of men as a glad rain-fall, sending coolness yet ere it comes:
So he showered above them, shadowed o'er the blue archipelagoes,
O'er the silken-shining pastures of the continents and the isles;
So descending brought revival to the greenery of our earth.

Lither, noisy in the breezes now his sisters shivering weep,
By the river flowing smooth out to the vexed sea of Adria,
Where he fell, and where they suffered sudden change to the tremulous
Ever-wailful trees bemoaning him, a bruised purple cyclamen.

A READING OF EARTH

SEED-TIME

I

Flowers of the willow-herb are wool;
Flowers of the briar berries red;
Speeding their seed as the breeze may rule,
Flowers of the thistle loosen the thread.
Flowers of the clematis drip in beard,
Slack from the fir-tree youngly climbed;
Chaplets in air, flies foliage seared;
Heeled upon earth, lie clusters rimed.

II

Where were skies of the mantle stained
Orange and scarlet, a coat of frieze
Travels from North till day has waned,
Tattered, soaked in the ditch's dyes;
Tumbles the rook under grey or slate;
Else enfolding us, damps to the bone;
Narrows the world to my neighbour's gate;
Paints me Life as a wheezy crone.

III

Now seems none but the spider lord;
Star in circle his web waits prey,
Silvering bush-mounds, blue brushing sward;
Slow runs the hour, swift flits the ray.
Now to his thread-shroud is he nigh,
Nigh to the tangle where wings are sealed,
He who frolicked the jewelled fly;
All is adroop on the down and the weald.

IV

Mists more lone for the sheep-bell enwrap
Nights that tardily let slip a morn
Paler than moons, and on noontide's lap
Flame dies cold, like the rose late born.
Rose born late, born withered in bud! —
I, even I, for a zenith of sun
Cry, to fulfil me, nourish my blood:
O for a day of the long light, one!

V

Master the blood, nor read by chills,
Earth admonishes: Hast thou ploughed,
Sown, reaped, harvested grain for the mills,
Thou hast the light over shadow of cloud.
Steadily eyeing, before that wail
Animal-infant, thy mind began,
Momently nearer me: should sight fail,
Plod in the track of the husbandman.

VI

Verily now is our season of seed,
Now in our Autumn; and Earth discerns
Them that have served her in them that can read,
Glassing, where under the surface she burns,
Quick at her wheel, while the fuel, decay,
Brightens the fire of renewal: and we?
Death is the word of a bovine day,
Know you the breast of the springing To-be.

HARD WEATHER

Bursts from a rending East in flaws
The young green leaflet's harrier, sworn
To strew the garden, strip the shaws,
And show our Spring with banner torn.
Was ever such virago morn?
The wind has teeth, the wind has claws.
All the wind's wolves through woods are loose,
The wild wind's falconry aloft.
Shrill underfoot the grassblade shrews,
At gallop, clumped, and down the croft
Bestrid by shadows, beaten, tossed;
It seems a scythe, it seems a rod.
The howl is up at the howl's accost;
The shivers greet and the shivers nod.

Is the land ship? we are rolled, we drive
Tritonly, cleaving hiss and hum;
Whirl with the dead, or mount or dive,
Or down in dregs, or on in scum.
And drums the distant, pipes the near,
And vale and hill are grey in grey,
As when the surge is crumbling sheer,
And sea-mews wing the haze of spray.
Clouds — are they bony witches? — swarms,
Darting swift on the robber's flight,
Hurry an infant sky in arms:
It peeps, it becks; 't is day, 't is night.

Black while over the loop of blue
The swathe is closed, like shroud on corse.
Lo, as if swift the Furies flew,
The Fates at heel at a cry to horse!

Interpret me the savage whirr:
And is it Nature scourged, or she,
Her offspring's executioner,
Reducing land to barren sea?
But is there meaning in a day
When this fierce angel of the air,
Intent to throw, and haply slay,
Can, for what breath of life we bear,
Exact the wrestle? Call to mind
The many meanings glistening up
When Nature to her nurslings kind,
Hands them the fruitage and the cup!
And seek we rich significance
Not otherwhere than with those tides
Of pleasure on the sunned expanse,
Whose flow deludes, whose ebb derides?

Look in the face of men who fare
Lock-mouthed, a match in lungs and thews
For this fierce angel of the air,
To twist with him and take his bruise.
That is the face beloved of old
Of Earth, young mother of her brood:
Nor broken for us shows the mould
When muscle is in mind renewed:
Though farther from her nature rude,
Yet nearer to her spirit's hold:

And though of gentler mood serene,
Still forceful of her fountain-jet.
So shall her blows be shrewdly met,
Be luminously read the scene
Where Life is at her grindstone set,
That she may give us edgeing keen,
String us for battle, till as play
The common strokes of fortune shower.
Such meaning in a dagger-day
Our wits may clasp to wax in power.
Yea, feel us warmer at her breast,
By spin of blood in lusty drill,
Than when her honeyed hands caressed,
And Pleasure, sapping, seemed to fill.

Behold the life at ease; it drifts.
The sharpened life commands its course.
She winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,
To dip her chosen in her source:
Contention is the vital force,
Whence pluck they brain, her prize of gifts,
Sky of the senses! on which height,
Not disconnected, yet released,
They see how spirit comes to light,
Through conquest of the inner beast,
Which Measure tames to movement sane,
In harmony with what is fair.
Never is Earth misread by brain:
That is the welling of her, there
The mirror: with one step beyond,
For likewise is it voice; and more,

Benignest kinship bids respond,
When wail the weak, and then restore
Whom days as fell as this may rive,
While Earth sits ebon in her gloom,
Us atomies of life alive
Unheeding, bent on life to come.
Her children of the labouring brain,
These are the champions of the race,
True parents, and the sole humane,
With understanding for their base.
Earth yields the milk, but all her mind
Is vowed to thresh for stouter stock.
Her passion for old giantkind,
That scaled the mount, uphurled the rock,
Devolves on them who read aright
Her meaning and devoutly serve;
Nor in her starlessness of night
Peruse her with the craven nerve:
But even as she from grass to corn,
To eagle high from grubbing mole,
Prove in strong brain her noblest born,
The station for the flight of soul.

THE SOUTH-WESTER

Day of the cloud in fleets! O day
Of wedded white and blue, that sail
Immingled, with a footing ray
In shadow-sandals down our vale! —
And swift to ravish golden meads,
Swift up the run of turf it speeds,
Thy bright of head and dark of heel,
To where the hilltop flings on sky,
As hawk from wrist or dust from wheel,
The tiptoe scalers tossed to fly: —
Thee the last thunder's caverned peal
Delivered from a wailful night:
All dusky round thy cradled light,
Those brine-born issues, now in bloom
Transfigured, wreathed as raven's plume
And briony-leaf to watch thee lie:
Dark eyebrows o'er a dreamful eye
Nigh opening: till in the braid
Of purpled vapours thou wert rosed:
Till that new babe a Goddess maid
Appeared and vividly disclosed
Her beat of life: then crimson played
On edges of the plume and leaf:
Shape had they and fair feature brief,
The wings, the smiles: they flew the breast,
Earth's milk. But what imperial march

Their standards led for earth, none guessed
Ere upward of a coloured arch,
An arrow straining eager head
Lightened, and high for zenith sped.
Fierier followed; followed Fire.
Name the young lord of Earth's desire,
Whose look her wine is, and whose mouth
Her music! Beauteous was she seen
Beneath her midway West of South;
And sister was her quivered green
To sapphire of the Nereid eyes
On sea when sun is breeze; she winked
As they, and waved, heaved waterwise
Her flood of leaves and grasses linked:
A myriad lustrous butterflies
A moment in the fluttering sheen;
Becapped with the slate air that throws
The reindeer's antlers black between
Low-frowning and wide-fallen snows,
A minute after; hooded, stoled
To suit a graveside Season's dirge.
Lo, but the breaking of a surge,
And she is in her lover's fold,
Illumined o'er a boundless range
Anew: and through quick morning hours
The Tropic-Arctic counterchange
Did seem to pant in beams and showers.

But noon beheld a larger heaven;
Beheld on our reflecting field
The Sower to the Bearer given,
And both their inner sweetest yield,

Fresh as when dews were grey or first
Received the flush of hues athirst.
Heard we the woodland, eyeing sun,
As harp and harper were they one.
A murky cloud a fair pursued,
Assailed, and felt the limbs elude:
He sat him down to pipe his woe,
And some strange beast of sky became:
A giant's club withheld the blow;
A milky cloud went all to flame.
And there were groups where silvery springs
The ethereal forest showed begirt
By companies in choric rings,
Whom but to see made ear alert.
For music did each movement rouse,
And motion was a minstrel's rage
To have our spirits out of house,
And bathe them on the open page.

This was a day that knew not age.
Since flew the vapoury twos and threes
From western pile to eastern rack;
As on from peaks of Pyrenees
To Graians; youngness ruled the track.
When songful beams were shut in caves,
And rainy drapery swept across;
When the ranked clouds were downy waves,
Breast of swan, eagle, albatross,
In ordered lines to screen the blue,
Youngest of light was nigh, we knew.

The silver finger of it laughed
Along the narrow rift: it shot,
Slew the huge gloom with golden shaft,
Then haled on high the volumed blot,
To build the hurling palace, cleave
The dazzling chasm; the flying nests,
The many glory-garlands weave,
Whose presence not our sight attests
Till wonder with the splendour blent,
And passion for the beauty flown,
Make evanescence permanent,
The thing at heart our endless own.

Only at gathered eve knew we
The marvels of the day: for then
Mount upon mountain out of sea
Arose, and to our spacious ken
Trebled sublime Olympus round
In towering amphitheatre.
Colossal on enormous mound,
Majestic gods we saw confer.
They wafted the Dream-messenger
From off the loftiest, the crowned:
That Lady of the hues of foam
In sun-rays: who, close under dome,
A figure on the foot's descent,
Irradiate to vapour went,
As one whose mission was resigned;
Dispieced, undraped, dissolved to threads.
Melting she passed into the mind,
Where immortal with mortal weds.

Whereby was known that we had viewed
The union of our earth and skies
Renewed: nor less alive renewed
Than when old bards, in nature wise,
Conceived pure beauty given to eyes,
And with undyingness imbued.
Pageant of man's poetic brain,
His grand procession of the song,
It was; the Muses and their train;
Their God to lead the glittering throng;
At whiles a beat of forest gong;
At whiles a glimpse of Python slain.
Mostly divinest harmony,
The lyre, the dance. We could believe
A life in orb and brook and tree
And cloud: and still holds Memory
A morning in the eyes of eve.

THE THRUSH IN FEBRUARY

I KNOW him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,
A herald of the million bills;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbours, piping to his world:—

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down,
An image of the deluge-ebb:—

And farther, they may hear along
The stream beneath the poplar row,
By fits, like welling rocks, the song
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale
When waves of warm South-western rains
Have left our heavens clear in pale,
With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermilion wings, by distance held
To pause aflight while fleeting swift:
And high aloft the pearl inshelled
Her lucid glow in glow will lift;

A little south of coloured sky;
Directing, gravely amorous,
The human of a tender eye
Through pure celestial on us:

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;
Unraying yet, more pearl than star;
She seems a while the vale to hold
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes;
An orb of lustre quits the height;
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,
Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,
The young time with the life ahead;
And my young time his leaping note
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,
Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,
My care was but to soothe my need;
At peace among the little worths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;
To that deep breast of song and light
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;
As 't is to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich
The simple to the common brings;
I keep the youth of souls who pitch
Their joy in this old heart of things:

Who feel the Coming young as aye,
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;
Alive for life, awake to die;
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer, passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of the Thought.
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird
Of promise! bird of happy breath!
I hear, I would the City heard.

The City of the smoky fray;
A prodded ox, it drags and moans:
Its Morrow no man's child; its Day
A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

It strives without a mark for strife;
It feasts beside a famished host:
The loose restraint of wanton life,
That threatened penance in the ghost!

Yet there our battle urges; there
Spring heroes many: issuing thence,
Names that should leave no vacant air
For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,
And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.
Those warriors of the sighting brain
Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead
The tidal multitude and blind
From bestial to the higher breed
By fighting souls of love divined.

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,
Unknown in nature. This they knew:
That life begets with fair increase
Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood,
The instinct bred afield would match
To pipe thereof a swelling flood,
Were men of Earth made wise in watch.

Though now the numbers count as drops
An urn might bear, they father Time.
She shapes anew her dusty crops;
Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create;
They climb to light, in her their root.
Your brutish cry at muffled fate
She smites with pangs of worse than brute.

She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears
A Mother whom no cry can melt;
But read her past desires and fears,
The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,
To sacrifice she prompts her best:
She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,
And stars rush forth of blackest night:
You chill not at a cold embrace
To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,
In oneness rise to quench the doubt.
This breath, her gift, has only choice
Of service, breathe we in or out.

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand
Led our wild steps from slimy rock
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,
We breathe but to be sword or block.

The sighting brain her good decree
Accepts; obeys those guides, in faith,
By reason hourly fed, that she,
To some the clod, to some the wraith,

Is more, no mask; a flame, a stream.
Flame, stream, are we, in mid career
From torrent source, delirious dream,
To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been
Her cherished offspring ever; how
The Spirit served by her is seen
Through Law; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains
Vitality as Earth it mates,
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,
The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all;
Her mystic secret then is ours:
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

THE APPEASEMENT OF DEMETER

I

Demeter devastated our good land,
In blackness for her daughter snatched below.
Smoke-pillar or loose hillock was the sand,
Where soil had been to clasp warm seed and throw
The wheat, vine, olive, ripe to Summer's ray.
Now whether night advancing, whether day,
Scarce did the baldness show:
The hand of man was a defeated hand.

II

Necessity, the primal goad to growth,
Stood shrunken; Youth and Age appeared as one;
Like Winter Summer; good as labour sloth;
Nor was there answer wherefore beamed the sun,
Or why men drew the breath to carry pain.
High reared the ploughshare, broken lay the wain,
Idly the flax-wheel spun
Unridered: starving lords were wasp and moth.

III

Lean grassblades losing green on their bent flags,
Sang chilly to themselves; lone honey-bees
Pursued the flowers that were not with dry bags;
Sole sound aloud the snap of sapless trees,
More sharp than slingstones on hard breastplates hurled.
Back to first chaos tumbled the stopped world,
Careless to lure or please.
A nature of gaunt ribs, an Earth of crags.

IV

No smile Demeter cast: the gloom she saw,
Well draped her direful musing; for in gloom,
In thicker gloom, deep down the cavern-maw,
Her sweet had vanished; liker unto whom,
And whose pale place of habitation mute,
She and all seemed where seasons, pledged for fruit
Anciently, gaped for bloom:
Where hand of man was as a plucked fowl's claw.

V

The wrathful Queen descended on a vale,
That ere the ravished hour for richness heaved.
Iambe, maiden of the merry tale,
Beside her eyed the once red-cheeked, green-leaved.
It looked as if the Deluge had withdrawn.
Pity caught at her throat; her jests were gone.
More than for her who grieved,
She could for this waste home have piped the wail.

VI

Iambe, her dear mountain-rivulet
To waken laughter from cold stones, beheld
A riven wheatfield cracking for the wet,
And seed like infant's teeth, that never swelled,
Apeep up flinty ridges, milkless round.
Teeth of the giants marked she where thin ground
Rocky in spikes rebelled
Against the hand here slack as rotted net.

VII

The valley people up the ashen scoop
She beckoned, aiming hopelessly to win
Her Mistress in compassion of yon group
So pinched and wizened; with their aged grin,
For lack of warmth to smile on mouths of woe,
White as in chalk outlining little O
Dumb, from a falling chin;
Young, old, alike half-bent to make the hoop.

VIII

Their tongues of birds they wagged, weak-voiced as when
Dark underwaters the recesses choke;
With cluck and upper quiver of a hen
In grasp, past pecking: cry before the croak.
Relentlessly their gold-haired Heaven, their fount
Bountiful of old days, heard them recount
This and that cruel stroke:
Nor eye nor ear had she for piteous men.

IX

A figure of black rock by sunbeams crowned
Through stormclouds, where the volumed shades enfold
An earth in awe before the claps resound
And woods and dwellings are as billows rolled,
The barren Nourisher unmelted shed
Death from the looks that wandered with the dead
Out of the realms of gold,
In famine for her lost, her lost unfound.

X

Iambe from her Mistress tripped; she raised
The cattle-call above the moan of prayer;
And slowly out of fields their fancy grazed,
Among the droves, defiled a horse and mare:
The wrecks of horse and mare: such ribs as view
Seas that have struck brave ships ashore, while through
Shoots the swift foamspit: bare
They nodded, and Demeter on them gazed.

XI

Howbeit the season of the dancing blood,
Forgot was horse of mare, yea, mare of horse:
Reversed, each head at either's flank, they stood.
Whereat the Goddess, in a dim remorse,
Laid hand on them, and smacked; and her touch pricked.
Neighing within, at either's flank they licked;
Played on a moment's force
At courtship, withering to the crazy nod.

XII

The nod was that we gather for consent;
And mournfully amid the group a dame,
Interpreting the thing in nature meant,
Her hands held out like bearers of the flame,
And nodded for the negative sideways.
Keen at her Mistress glanced Iambe: rays
From the Great Mother came:
Her lips were opened wide; the curse was rent.

XIII

She laughed: since our first harvesting heard none
Like thunder of the song of heart: her face,
The dreadful darkness, shook to mounted sun,
And peal on peal across the hills held chase.
She laughed herself to water; laughed to fire;
Laughed the torrential laugh of dam and sire
Full of the marrowy race.
Her laughter, Gods! was flesh on skeleton.

XIV

The valley people huddled, broke, afraid,
Assured, and taking lightning in the veins,
They puffed, they leaped, linked hands, together swayed,
Unwitting happiness till golden rains
Of tears in laughter, laughter weeping, smote
Knowledge of milky mercy from that throat
Pouring to heal their pains:
And one bold youth set mouth at a shy maid.

XV

Iambe clapped to see the kindly lusts
Inspire the valley people, still on seas,
Like poplar-tops relieved from stress of gusts,
With rapture in their wonderment; but these,
Low homage being rendered, ran to plough,
Fed by the laugh, as by the mother cow
Calves at the teats they tease:
Soon drove they through the yielding furrow-crusts.

XVI

Uprose the blade in green, the leaf in red,
The tree of water and the tree of wood:
And soon among the branches overhead
Gave beauty juicy issue sweet for food.
O Laughter! beauty plumped and love had birth.
Laughter! O thou reviver of sick Earth!
Good for the spirit, good
For body, thou! to both art wine and bread!

EARTH AND A WEDDED WOMAN

I

The shepherd, with his eye on hazy South,
Has told of rain upon the fall of day.
But promise is there none for Susan's drouth,
That he will come, who keeps in dry delay.
The freshest of the village three years gone,
She hangs as the white field-rose hangs short-lived;
And she and Earth are one
In withering unrevived.
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain!

II

Ah, what is Marriage, says each pouting maid,
When she who wedded with the soldier hides
At home as good as widowed in the shade,
A lighthouse to the girls that would be brides:
Nor dares to give a lad an ogle, nor
To dream of dancing, but must hang and moan
Her husband in the war,
And she to lie alone.
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain!

III

They have not known; they are not in the stream;
Light as the flying seed-ball is their play,
The silly maids! and happy souls they seem;
Yet Grief would not change fates with such as they.
They have not struck the roots which meet the fires
Beneath, and bind us fast with Earth, to know
The strength of her desires,
The sternness of her woe.
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain!

IV

Now, shepherd, see thy word, where without shower
A borderless low blotting Westward spreads.
The hall-clock holds the valley on the hour;
Across an inner chamber thunder treads:
The dead leaf trips, the tree-top swings, the floor
Of dust whirls, dropping lumped: near thunder speaks,
And drives the dames to door,
Their kerchiefs flapped at cheeks.
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!
And welcome waterspouts of blessed rain!

V

Through night, with bedroom window wide for air,
Lay Susan tranced to hear all heaven descend:
And gurgling voices came of Earth, and rare,
Past flowerful, breathings, deeper than life's end,

From her heaved breast of sacred common mould;
Whereby this lone-laid wife was moved to feel
Unworded things and old
To her pained heart appeal.
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!
And down in deluges of blessed rain!

VI

At morn she stood to live for ear and sight,
Love sky or cloud, or rose or grasses drenched.
A lureful devil, that in glow-worm light
Set languor writhing all its folds, she quenched.
But she would muse when neighbours praised her face,
Her services, and staunchness to her mate:
Knowing by some dim trace,
The change might bear a date.
Rain! O the glad refresher of the grain!
Thrice beauteous is our sunshine after rain!

MOTHER TO BABE

I

Fleck of sky you are,
Dropped through branches dark,
  O my little one, mine!
Promise of the star,
Outpour of the lark;
  Beam and song divine.

II

See this precious gift,
Steeping in new birth
  All my being, for sign
Earth to heaven can lift,
Heaven descend on earth,
  Both in one be mine!

III

Life in light you glass
When you peep and coo,
  You, my little one, mine!
Brooklet chirps to grass,
Daisy looks in dew
  Up to dear sunshine.

WOODLAND PEACE

Sweet as Eden is the air,
And Eden-sweet the ray.
No Paradise is lost for them
Who foot by branching root and stem,
And lightly with the woodland share
The change of night and day.

Here all say,
We serve her, even as I:
We brood, we strive to sky,
We gaze upon decay,
We wot of life through death,
How each feeds each we spy;
And is a tangle round,
Are patient; what is dumb,
We question not, nor ask
The silent to give sound,
The hidden to unmask,
The distant to draw near.

And this the woodland saith:
I know not hope or fear;
I take whate'er may come;
I raise my head to aspects fair,
From foul I turn away.

Sweet as Eden is the air,
And Eden-sweet the ray.

THE QUESTION WHITHER

I

When we have thrown off this old suit,
So much in need of mending,
To sink among the naked mute,
Is that, think you, our ending?
We follow many, more we lead,
And you who sadly turf us,
Believe not that all living seed
Must flower above the surface.

II

Sensation is a gracious gift,
But were it cramped to station,
The prayer to have it cast adrift,
Would spout from all sensation.
Enough if we have winked to sun,
Have sped the plough a season;
There is a soul for labour done,
Endureth fixed as reason.

III

Then let our trust be firm in Good,
  Though we be of the fasting;
Our questions are a mortal brood,
  Our work is everlasting.
We children of Beneficence
  Are in its being sharers;
And Whither vainer sounds than Whence,
  For word with such wayfarers.

OUTER AND INNER

I

From twig to twig the spider weaves
  At noon his webbing fine.
So near to mute the zephyrs flute
  That only leaflets dance.
The sun draws out of hazel leaves
  A smell of woodland wine.
I wake a swarm to sudden storm
  At any step's advance.

II

Along my path is bugloss blue,
  The star with fruit in moss;
The foxgloves drop from throat to top
  A daily lesser bell.
The blackest shadow, nurse of dew,
  Has orange skeins across;
And keenly red is one thin thread
  That flashing seems to swell.

III

My world I note ere fancy comes,
  Minutest hushed observe:
What busy bits of motioned wits
  Through antlered mosswork strive.

But now so low the stillness hums,
My springs of seeing swerve,
For half a wink to thrill and think
The woods with nymphs alive.

IV

I neighbour the invisible
So close that my consent
Is only asked for spirits masked
To leap from trees and flowers.
And this because with them I dwell
In thought, while calmly bent
To read the lines dear Earth designs
Shall speak her life on ours.

V

Accept, she says; it is not hard
In woods; but she in towns
Repeats, accept; and have we wept,
And have we quailed with fears,
Or shrunk with horrors, sure reward
We have whom knowledge crowns;
Who see in mould the rose unfold,
The soul through blood and tears.

NATURE AND LIFE

I

Leave the uproar: at a leap
Thou shalt strike a woodland path,
Enter silence, not of sleep,
Under shadows, not of wrath;
Breath which is the spirit's bath,
In the old Beginnings find,
And endow them with a mind,
Seed for seedling, swathe for swathe.
That gives Nature to us, this
Give we her, and so we kiss.

II

Fruitful is it so: but hear
How within the shell thou art,
Music sounds; nor other near
Can to such a tremor start.
Of the waves our life is part;
They our running harvests bear:
Back to them for manful air,
Laden with the woodland's heart!
That gives Battle to us, this
Give we it, and good the kiss.

DIRGE IN WOODS

A WIND sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.
The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;
And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.

A FAITH ON TRIAL

On the morning of May,
Ere the children had entered my gate
With their wreaths and mechanical lay,
A metal ding-dong of the date!
I mounted our hill, bearing heart
That had little of life save its weight:
The crowned Shadow poising dart
Hung over her: she, my own,
My good companion, mate,
Pulse of me: she who had shown
Fortitude quiet as Earth's
At the shedding of leaves. And around
The sky was in garlands of cloud,
Winning scents from unnumbered new births,
Pointed buds, where the woods were browned
By a mouldered beechen shroud;
Or over our meads of the vale,
Such an answer to sun as he,
Brave in his gold; to a sound,
None sweeter, of woods flapping sail,
With the first full flood of our year,
For their voyage on lustreful sea:
Unto what curtained haven in chief,
Will be writ in the book of the sere.
But surely the crew are we,

Eager or stamped or bowed;
Counted thinner at fall of the leaf.
Grief heard them, and passed like a bier.
Due Summerward, lo, they were set,
In volumes of foliage proud,
On the heave of their favouring tides,
And their song broadened out to the cheer
When a neck of the ramping surf
Rattles thunder a boat overrides.
All smiles ran the highways wet;
The worm drew its links from the turf;
The bird of felicity loud,
Spun high, and a South wind blew.
Weak out of sheath downy leaves
Of the beech quivered lucid as dew,
Their radiance asking, who grieves;
For nought of a sorrow they knew:
No space to the dread wrestle vowed,
No chamber in shadow of night.
At times as the steadier breeze
Flutter-huddled their twigs to a crowd,
The beam of them wafted my sight
To league-long sun upon seas:
The golden path we had crossed
Many years, till her birthland swung
Recovered to vision from lost,
A light in her filial glance.
And sweet was her voice with the tongue,
The speechful tongue of her France,
Soon at ripple about us, like rills
Ever busy with little: away

Through her Normandy, down where the mills
Dot at lengths a rivercourse, grey
As its bordering poplars bent
To gusts off the plains above.
Old stone château and farms,
Home of her birth and her love!
On the thread of the pasture you trace,
By the river, their milk, for miles,
Spotted once with the English tent,
In days of the tocsin's alarms,
To tower of the tallest of piles,
The country's surveyor breast-high.
Home of her birth and her love!
Home of a diligent race;
Thrifty, deft-handed to ply
Shuttle or needle, and woo
Sun to the roots of the pear
Frogging each mud-walled cot.
The elders had known her in arms.
There plucked we the bluet, her hue
Of the deeper forget-me-not;
Well wedding her ripe-wheat hair.

I saw, unsighting: her heart
I saw, and the home of her love
There printed, mournfully rent:
Her ebbing adieu, her adieu,
And the stride of the Shadow athwart.
For one of our Autumns there! . . .
Straight as the flight of a dove
We went, swift winging we went.

We trod solid ground, we breathed air,
The heavens were unbroken. Break they,
The word of the world is adieu:
Her word: and the torrents are round,
The jawed wolf-waters of prey.
We stand upon isles, who stand:
A Shadow before us, and back,
A phantom the habited land.
We may cry to the Sunderer, spare
That dearest! he loosens his pack.
Arrows we breathe, not air.
The memories tenderly bound
To us are a drifting crew,
Amid grey-gapped waters for ground.
Alone do we stand, each one,
Till rootless as they we strew
Those deeps of the corse-like stare
At a foreign and stony sun.

Eyes had I but for the scene
Of my circle, what neighbourly grew.
If haply no finger lay out
To the figures of days that had been,
I gathered my herb, and endured;
My old cloak wrapped me about.
Unfooted was ground-ivy blue,
Whose rustic shrewd odour allured
In Spring's fresh of morning: unseen
Her favourite wood-sorrel bell
As yet, though the leaves' green floor
Awaited their flower, that would tell

of a red-veined moist yestreen,
With its droop and the hues it wore,
When we two stood overnight
One, in the dark van-glow
On our hill-top, seeing beneath,
Our household's twinkle of light
Through spruce-boughs, gem of a wreath.

Budding, the service-tree, white
Almost as whitebeam, threw,
From the under of leaf upright,
Flecks like a showering snow
On the flame-shaped junipers green,
On the sombre mounds of the yew.
Like silvery tapers bright
By a solemn cathedral screen,
They glistened to closer view.
Turf for a rooks' revel striped,
Pleased those devourers astute.
Chorister blackbird and thrush
Together or alternate piped;
A free-hearted harmony large,
With meaning for man, for brute,
When the primitive forces are brimmed
Like featherings hither and yon
Of aëry tree-twigs over marge,
To the comb of the winds, untrimmed,
Their measure is found in the vast.
Grief heard them, and stepped her way on.
She has but a narrow embrace.
Distrustful of hearing she passed.

They piped her young Earth's Bacchic rout;
The race, and the prize of the race;
Earth's lustihead pressing to sprout.

But sight holds a soberer space.
Colourless dogwood low,
Curled up a twisted root,
Nigh yellow-green mosses, to flush
Redder than sun upon rocks,
When the creeper clematis-shoot
Shall climb, cap his branches, and show,
Beside veteran green of the box,
At close of the year's maple blush,
A bleeding greybeard is he,
Now hale in the leafage lush.
Our parasites paint us. Hard by,
A wet yew-trunk flashed the peel
Of our naked forefathers in fight;
With stains of the fray sweating free;
And him came no parasite nigh:
Firm on the hard knotted knee,
He stood in the crown of his dun;
Earth's toughest to stay her wheel:
Under whom the full day is night;
Whom the century-tempests call son,
Having striven to rend him in vain.

I walked to observe, not to feel,
Not to fancy, if simple of eye
One may be among images reaped
For a shift of the glance, as grain:

Profitless froth you espy
Ashore after billows have leaped.
I fled nothing, nothing pursued:
The changeful visible face
Of our Mother I sought for my food;
Crumbs by the way to sustain.
Her sentence I knew past grace.
Myself I had lost of us twain,
Once bound in mirroring thought.
She had flung me to dust in her wake;
And I, as your convict drags
His chain, by the scourge untaught,
Bore life for a goad, without aim.
I champed the sensations that make
Of a ruffled philosophy rags.
For them was no meaning too blunt,
Nor aspect too cutting of steel.
This Earth of the beautiful breasts,
Shining up in all colours aflame,
To them had visage of hags:
A Mother of aches and jests:
Soulless, heading a hunt
Aimless except for the meal.
Hope, with the star on her front;
Fear, with an eye in the heel;
Our links to a Mother of grace;
They were dead on the nerve, and dead
For the nature divided in three;
Gone out of heart, out of brain,
Out of soul: I had in their place
The calm of an empty room.

We were joined but by that thin thread,
My disciplined habit to see.
And those conjure images, those,
The puppets of loss or gain;
Not he who is bare to his doom;
For whom never semblance plays
To bewitch, overcloud, illume.
The dusty mote-images rose;
Sheer film of the surface awag:
They sank as they rose; their pain
Declaring them mine of old days.

Now gazed I where, sole upon gloom,
As flower-bush in sun-specked crag,
Up the spine of the double combe
With yew-boughs heavily cloaked,
A young apparition shone:
Known, yet wonderful, white
Surpassingly; doubtfully known,
For it struck as the birth of Light:
Even Day from the dark unyoked.
It waved like a pilgrim flag
O'er processional penitents flown
When of old they broke rounding yon spine:
O the pure wild-cherry in bloom!

For their Eastward march to the shrine
Of the footsore far-eyed Faith,
Was banner so brave, so fair,
So quick with celestial sign
Of victorious rays over death?
For a conquest of coward despair; —

Division of soul from wits,
And these made rulers; — full sure,
More starlike never did shine
To illumine the sinister field
Where our life's old night-bird flits.
I knew it: with her, my own,
Had hailed it pure of the pure;
Our beacon yearly: but strange
When it strikes to within is the known;
Richer than newness revealed.
There was needed darkness like mine.
Its beauty to vividness blown,
Drew the life in me forward, chased,
From aloft on a pinnacle's range,
That hindward spidery line,
The length of the ways I had paced,
A footfarer out of the dawn,
To Youth's wild forest, where sprang,
For the morning of May long gone,
The forest's white virgin; she
Seen yonder; and sheltered me, sang;
She in me, I in her; what songs
The fawn-eared wood-hollows revive
To pour forth their tune-footed throngs;
Inspire to the dreaming of good
Illimitable to come:
She, the white wild cherry, a tree,
Earth-rooted, tangibly wood,
Yet a presence throbbing alive;
Nor she in our language dumb:
A spirit born of a tree;

Because earth-rooted alive:
Huntress of things worth pursuit
Of souls; in our naming, dreams.
And each unto other was lute,
By fits quick as breezy gleams.
My quiver of aims and desires
Had colour that she would have owned;
And if by humaner fires
Hued later, these held her enthroned:
My crescent of Earth; my blood
At the silvery early stir;
Hour of the thrill of the bud
About to burst, and by her
Directed, attuned, englobed:
My Goddess, the chaste, not chill;
Choir over choir white-robed;
White-bosomed fold within fold:
For so could I dream, breast-bare,
In my time of blooming; dream still
Through the maze, the mesh, and the wreck,
Despite, since manhood was bold,
The yoke of the flesh on my neck.
She beckoned, I gazed, unaware
How a shaft of the blossoming tree
Was shot from the yew-wood's core.
I stood to the touch of a key
Turned in a fast-shut door.

They rounded my garden, content,
The small fry, clutching their fee,
Their fruit of the wreath and the pole;
And, chatter, hop, skip, they were sent.

In a buzz of young company glee,
Their natural music, swift shoal
To the next easy shedders of pence.
Why not? for they had me in tune
With the hungers of my kind.

Do readings of earth draw thence,
Then a concord deeper than cries
Of the Whither whose echo is Whence,
To jar unanswered, shall rise
As a fountain-jet in the mind
Bowed dark o'er the falling and strewn.

. . . . . .

Unwitting where it might lead,
How it came, for the anguish to cease,
And the Questions that sow not nor spin,
This wisdom, rough-written, and black,
As of veins that from venom bleed,
I had with the peace within;
Or patience, mortal of peace,
Compressing the surgent strife
In a heart laid open, not mailed,
To the last blank hour of the rack,
When struck the dividing knife:
When the hand that never had failed
In its pressure to mine hung slack.

But this in myself did I know,
Not needing a studious brow,
Or trust in a governing star,
While my ears held the jangled shout

The children were lifting afar:
That natures at interflow
With all of their past and the now,
Are chords to the Nature without,
Orbs to the greater whole:
First then, nor utterly then
Till our lord of sensations at war,
The rebel, the heart, yields place
To brain, each prompting the soul.
Thus our dear Earth we embrace
For the milk, her strength to men.

And crave we her medical herb,
We have but to see and hear,
Though pierced by the cruel acerb,
The troops of the memories armed
Hostile to strike at the nest
That nourished and flew them warmed.
Not she gives the tear for the tear.
Weep, bleed, rave, writhe, be distraught,
She is moveless. Not of her breast
Are the symbols we conjure when Fear
Takes leaven of Hope. I caught,
With Death in me shrinking from Death,
As cold from cold, for a sign
Of the life beyond ashes: I cast,
Believing the vision divine,
Wings of that dream of my Youth
To the spirit beloved: 't was unglassed
On her breast, in her depths austere:
A flash through the mist, mere breath,

Breath on a buckler of steel.
For the flesh in revolt at her laws,
Neither song nor smile in ruth,
Nor promise of things to reveal,
Has she, nor a word she saith:
We are asking her wheels to pause.
Well knows she the cry of unfaith.
If we strain to the farther shore,
We are catching at comfort near.
Assurances, symbols, saws,
Revelations in Legends, light
To eyes rolling darkness, these
Desired of the flesh in affright,
For the which it will swear to adore,
She yields not for prayers at her knees;
The woolly beast bleating will shear.
These are our sensual dreams;
Of the yearning to touch, to feel
The dark Impalpable sure,
And have the Unveiled appear;
Whereon ever black she beams,
Doth of her terrible deal,
She who dotes over ripeness at play,
Rosiness fondles and feels,
Guides it with shepherding crook,
To her sports and her pastures alway.
Not she gives the tear for the tear:
Harsh wisdom gives Earth, no more;
In one the spur and the curb:
An answer to thoughts or deeds;
To the Legends an alien look;

To the Questions a figure of clay.
Yet we have but to see and hear,
Crave we her medical herb.
For the road to her soul is the Real:
The root of the growth of man:
And the senses must traverse it fresh
With a love that no scourge shall abate,
To reach the lone heights where we scan
In the mind's rarer vision this flesh;
In the charge of the Mother our fate;
Her law as the one common weal.

We, whom the view benumbs,
We, quivering upward, each hour
Know battle in air and in ground
For the breath that goes as it comes,
For the choice between sweet and sour,
For the smallest grain of our worth:
And he who the reckoning sums,
Finds nought in his hand save Earth.
Of Earth are we stripped or crowned.
The fleeting Present we crave,
Barter our best to wed,
In hope of a cushioned bower,
What is it but Future and Past
Like wind and tide at a wave!
Idea of the senses, bred
For the senses to snap and devour:
Thin as the shell of a sound
In delivery, withered in light.
Cry we for permanence fast,

Permanence hangs by the grave;
Sits on the grave green-grassed,
On the roll of the heaved grave-mound.
By Death, as by Life, are we fed:
The two are one spring; our bond
With the numbers; with whom to unite
Here feathers wings for beyond:
Only they can waft us in flight.
For they are Reality's flower.
Of them, and the contact with them,
Issues Earth's dearest daughter, the firm
In footing, the stately of stem;
Unshaken though elements lour;
A warrior heart unquelled;
Mirror of Earth, and guide
To the Holies from sense withheld:
Reason, man's germinant fruit.
She wrestles with our old worm
Self in the narrow and wide:
Relentless quencher of lies,
With laughter she pierces the brute;
And hear we her laughter peal,
'T is Light in us dancing to scour
The loathed recess of his dens;
Scatter his monstrous bed,
And hound him to harrow and plough.
She is the world's one prize;
Our champion, rightfully head;
The vessel whose piloted prow,
Though Folly froth round, hiss and hoot,
Leaves legible print at the keel.

Nor least is the service she does,
That service to her may cleanse
The well of the Sorrows in us;
For a common delight will drain
The rank individual fens
Of a wound refusing to heal
While the old worm slavers its root.

I bowed as a leaf in rain;
As a tree when the leaf is shed
To winds in the season at wane:
And when from my soul I said,
May the worm be trampled: smite,
Sacred Reality! power
Filled me to front it aright.
I had come of my faith's ordeal.

It is not to stand on a tower
And see the flat universe reel;
Our mortal sublimities drop
Like raiment by glisterlings worn,
At a sweep of the scythe for the crop.
Wisdom is won of its fight,
The combat incessant; and dries
To mummywrap perching a height.
It chews the contemplative cud
In peril of isolate scorn,
Unfed of the onward flood.
Nor view we a different morn
If we gaze with the deeper sight,
With the deeper thought forewise:

The world is the same, seen through;
The features of men are the same.
But let their historian new,
In the language of nakedness write,
Rejoice we to know not shame,
Not a dread, not a doubt: to have done
With the tortures of thought in the throes,
Our animal tangle, and grass
Very sap of the vital in this:
That from flesh unto spirit man grows
Even here on the sod under sun:
That she of the wanton's kiss
Broken through with the bite of an asp,
Is Mother of simple truth,
Relentless quencher of lies;
Eternal in thought; discerned
In thought mid-ferry between
The Life and the Death, which are one,
As our breath in and out, joy or teen.
She gives the rich vision to youth,
If we will, of her prompting wise;
Or men by the lash made lean,
Who in harness the mind subserve,
Their title to read her have earned;
Having mastered sensation — insane
At a stroke of the terrified nerve;
And out of the sensual hive,
Grown to the flower of brain;
To know her a thing alive,
Whose aspects mutably swerve,
Whose laws immutably reign.

Our sentencer, clother in mist,
Her morn bends breast to her noon,
Noon to the hour dark-dyed,
If we will, of her promptings wise:
Her light is our own if we list.
The Legends that sweep her aside,
Crying loud for an opiate boon,
To comfort the human want,
From the bosom of magical skies,
She smiles on, marking their source:
They read her with infant eyes.
Good ships of morality they,
For our crude developing force;
Granite the thought to stay,
That she is a thing alive
To the living, the falling and strewn.
But the Questions, the broods that haunt
Sensation insurgent, may drive,
The way of the channelling mole,
Head in a ground-vault gaunt
As your telescope's skeleton moon.
Barren comfort to these will she dole;
Dead is her face to their cries.
Intelligence pushing to taste,
A lesson from beasts might heed.
They scatter a voice in the waste,
Where any dry swish of a reed
By grey-glassy water replies.

'They see not above or below;
'Farthest are they from my soul,'

Earth whispers: 'they scarce have the thirst,
'Except to unriddle a rune;
'And I spin none; only show,
'Would humanity soar from its worst,
'Winged above darkness and dole,
'How flesh unto spirit must grow.
'Spirit raves not for a goal.
'Shapes in man's likeness hewn,
'Desires not; neither desires
'The Sleep or the Glory: it trusts;
'Uses my gifts, yet aspires;
'Dreams of a higher than it.
'The dream is an atmosphere;
'A scale still ascending to knit
'The clear to the loftier Clear.
''T is Reason herself, tiptoe
'At the ultimate bound of her wit,
'On the verges of Night and Day.
'But is it a dream of the lusts,
'To my dustiest 't is decreed;
'And them that so shuffle astray,
'I touch with no key of gold
'For the wealth of the secret nook;
'Though I dote over ripeness at play,
'Rosiness fondle and feed,
'Guide it with shepherding crook
'To my sports and my pastures alway.
'The key will shriek in the lock,
'The door will rustily hinge,
'Will open on features of mould,
'To vanish corrupt at a glimpse,

'And mock as the wild echoes mock,
'Soulless in mimic, doth Greed
'Or the passion for fruitage tinge
'That dream, for your parricide imps
'To wing through the body of Time,
'Yourselves in slaying him slay.
'Much are you shots of your prime,
'You men of the act and the dream:
'And please you to fatten a weed
'That perishes, pledged to decay,
''T is dearth in your season of need,
'Down the slopes of the shoreward way;—
'Nigh on the misty stream,
'Where Ferryman under his hood,
'With a call to be ready to pay
'The small coin, whitens red blood.
'But the young ethereal seed
'Shall bring you the bread no buyer
'Can have for his craving supreme;
'To my quenchless quick shall speed
'The soul at her wrestle rude
'With devil, with angel more dire;
'With the flesh, with the Fates, enringed.
'The dream of the blossom of Good,
'Is your banner of battle unrolled
'In its waver and current and curve
'(Choir over choir white-winged,
'White-bosomed fold within fold):
'Hopeful of victory most
'When hard is the task to sustain
'Assaults of the fearful sense

'At a mind in desolate mood
'With the Whither, whose echo is Whence;
'And humanity's clamour, lost, lost;
'And its clasp of the staves that snap;
'And evil abroad, as a main
'Uproarious, bursting its dyke.
'For back do you look, and lo,
'Forward the harvest of grain! —
'Numbers in council, awake
'To love more than things of my lap,
'Love me; and to let the types break,
'Men be grass, rocks rivers, all flow;
'All save the dream sink alike
'To the source of my vital in sap:
'Their battle, their loss, their ache,
'For my pledge of vitality know.
'The dream is the thought in the ghost;
'The thought sent flying for food;
'Eyeless, but sprung of an aim
'Supernal of Reason, to find
'The great Over-Reason we name
'Beneficence: mind seeking Mind.
'Dream of the blossom of Good,
'In its waver and current and curve,
'With the hopes of my offspring enscrolled!
'Soon to be seen of a host
'The flag of the Master I serve!
'And life in them doubled on Life,
'As flame upon flame, to behold,
'High over Time-tumbled sea,
'The bliss of his headship of strife,
'Him through handmaiden me.'

CHANGE IN RECURRENCE

I

I stood at the gate of the cot
Where my darling, with side-glance demure,
Would spy, on her trim garden-plot,
The busy wild things chase and lure.
For these with their ways were her feast
They had surety no enemy lurked.
Their deftest of tricks to their least,
She gathered in watch as she worked.

II

When berries were red on her ash,
The blackbird would rifle them rough,
Till the ground underneath looked a gash,
And her rogue grew the round of a chough.
The squirrel cocked ear o'er his hoop,
Up the spruce, quick as eye, trailing brush.
She knew any tit of the troop
All as well as the snail-tapping thrush.

III

I gazed: 't was the scene of the frame,
With the face, the dear life for me, fled.
No window a lute to my name,
No watcher there plying the thread.
But the blackbird hung pecking at will;
The squirrel from cone hopped to cone;
The thrush had a snail in his bill,
And tap-tapped the shell hard on a stone.

HYMN TO COLOUR

I

With Life and Death I walked when Love appeared,
And made them on each side a shadow seem.
Through wooded vales the land of dawn we neared,
Where down smooth rapids whirls the helmless dream
To fall on daylight; and night puts away
Her darker veil for grey.

II

In that grey veil green grassblades brushed we by;
We came where woods breathed sharp, and overhead
Rocks raised clear horns on a transforming sky:
Around, save for those shapes, with him who led
And linked them, desert varied by no sign
Of other life than mine.

III

By this the dark-winged planet, raying wide,
From the mild pearl-glow to the rose upborne,
Drew in his fires, less faint than far descried,
Pure-fronted on a stronger wave of morn:
And those two shapes the splendour interweaved,
Hung web-like, sank and heaved.

IV

Love took my hand when hidden stood the sun
To fling his robe on shoulder-heights of snow.
Then said: There lie they, Life and Death in one.
Whichever is, the other is: but know,
It is thy craving self that thou dost see,
Not in them seeing me.

V

Shall man into the mystery of breath,
From his quick beating pulse a pathway spy?
Or learn the secret of the shrouded death,
By lifting up the lid of a white eye?
Cleave thou thy way with fathering desire
Of fire to reach to fire.

VI

Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes
The house of heaven splendid for the bride.
To him as leaps a fountain she awakes,
In knotting arms, yet boundless: him beside,
She holds the flower to heaven, and by his power
Brings heaven to the flower.

VII

He gives her homeliness in desert air,
And sovereignty in spaciousness; he leads
Through widening chambers of surprise to where
Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes,
Because his touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends.

VIII

Death begs of Life his blush; Life Death persuades
To keep long day with his caresses graced.
He is the heart of light, the wing of shades,
The crown of beauty: never soul embraced
Of him can harbour unfaith; soul of him
Possessed walks never dim.

IX

Love eyed his rosy memories: he sang:
O bloom of dawn, breathed up from the gold sheaf
Held springing beneath Orient! that dost hang
The space of dewdrops running over leaf;
Thy fleetingness is bigger in the ghost
Than Time with all his host!

X

Of thee to say behold, has said adieu.
But love remembers how the sky was green,
And how the grasses glimmered lightest blue;
How saint-like grey took fervour: how the screen
Of cloud grew violet; how thy moment came
Between a blush and flame.

XI

Love saw the emissary eglantine
Break wave round thy white feet above the gloom;
Lay finger on thy star; thy raiment line
With cherub wing and limb; wed thy soft bloom,
Gold-quivering like sunrays in thistle-down,
Earth under rolling brown.

XII

They do not look through love to look on thee,
Grave heavenliness! nor know they joy of sight,
Who deem the wave of rapt desire must be
Its wrecking and last issue of delight.
Dead seasons quicken in one petal-spot
Of colour unforgot.

XIII

This way have men come out of brutishness
To spell the letters of the sky and read
A reflex upon earth else meaningless.
With thee, O fount of the Untimed! to lead;
Drink they of thee, thee eyeing, they unaged
Shall on through brave wars waged.

XIV

More gardens will they win than any lost;
The vile plucked out of them, the unlovely slain.
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,
To stature of the Gods will they attain.
They shall uplift their Earth to meet her Lord,
Themselves the attuning chord!

XV

The song had ceased; my vision with the song.
Then of those Shadows, which one made descent
Beside me I knew not: but Life ere long
Came on me in the public ways and bent
Eyes deeper than of old: Death met I too,
And saw the dawn glow through.

MEDITATION UNDER STARS

What links are ours with orbs that are
So resolutely far:
The solitary asks, and they
Give radiance as from a shield:
Still at the death of day,
The seen, the unrevealed.
Implacable they shine
To us who would of Life obtain
An answer for the life we strain,
To nourish with one sign.
Nor can imagination throw
The penetrative shaft: we pass
The breath of thought, who would divine
If haply they may grow
As Earth; have our desire to know;
If life comes there to grain from grass,
And flowers like ours of toil and pain;
Has passion to beat bar,
Win space from cleaving brain;
The mystic link attain,
Whereby star holds on star.

Those visible immortals beam
Allurement to the dream:
Ireful at human hungers brook
No question in the look.

For ever virgin to our sense,
Remote they wane to gaze intense:
Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite
The beating heart behind the ball of sight:
Till we conceive their heavens hoar,
Those lights they raise but sparkles frore,
And Earth, our blood-warm Earth, a shuddering prey
To that frigidity of brainless ray.

Yet space is given for breath of thought
Beyond our bounds when musing: more
When to that musing love is brought,
And love is asked of love's wherefore.
'T is Earth's, her gift; else have we nought:
Her gift, her secret, here our tie.
And not with her and yonder sky?
Bethink you: were it Earth alone
Breeds love, would not her region be
The sole delight and throne
Of generous Deity?

To deeper than this ball of sight
Appeal the lustrous people of the night.
Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery sails,
It is our ravenous that quails,
Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears distraught.
The spirit leaps alight,
Doubts not in them is he,
The binder of his sheaves, the same, the right:
Of magnitude to magnitude is wrought,

To feel it large of the great life they hold:
In them to come, or vaster intervolved,
The issues known in us, our unsolved solved:
That there with toil Life climbs the self-same Tree,
Whose roots enrichment have from ripeness dropped.
So may we read and little find them cold:
Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide
Our eyes; no branch of Reason's growing lopped;
Nor dreaming on a dream; but fortified
By day to penetrate black midnight; see,
Hear, feel, outside the senses; even that we,
The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,
We who reflect those rays, though low our place,
To them are lastingly allied.

So may we read, and little find them cold:
Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,
Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.
The fire is in them whereof we are born;
The music of their motion may be ours.
Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and voiced
Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.
Of love, the grand impulsion, we behold
The love that lends her grace
Among the starry fold.
Then at new flood of customary morn,
Look at her through her showers,
Her mists, her streaming gold,
A wonder edges the familiar face:
She wears no more that robe of printed hours;
Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers.

WOODMAN AND ECHO

Close Echo hears the woodman's axe,
To double on it, as in glee,
With clap of hands, and little lacks
Of meaning in her repartee.
For all shall fall,
As one has done,
The tree of me,
Of thee the tree;
And unto all
The fate we wait
Reveals the wheels
Whereon we run:
We tower to flower,
We spread the shade,
We drop for crop,
At length are laid;
Are rolled in mould,
From chop and lop:
And are we thick in woodland tracks,
Or tempting of our stature we,
The end is one, we do but wax
For service over land and sea.
So, strike! the like
Shall thus of us,
My brawny woodman, claim the tax.

Nor foe thy blow,
Though wood be good,
And shriekingly the timber cracks:
The ground we crowned
Shall speed the seed
Of younger into swelling sacks.

For use he hews,
To make awake
The spirit of what stuff we be:
Our earth of mirth
And tears he clears
For braver, let our minds agree;
And then will men
Within them win
And Echo clapping harmony.

THE WISDOM OF ELD

We spend our lives in learning pilotage,
And grow good steersmen when the vessel's crank!
Gap-toothed he spake and with a tottering shank
Sidled to gain the sunny bench of Age.
It is the sentence which completes that stage;
A testament of wisdom reading blank.
The seniors of the race, on their last plank,
Pass mumbling it as nature's final page.
These, bent by such experience, are the band
Who captain young enthusiasts to maintain
What things we view, and Earth's decree withstand,
Lest dreaded Change, long dammed by dull decay,
Should bring the world a vessel steered by brain,
And ancients musical at close of day.

EARTH'S PREFERENCE

Earth loves her young: a preference manifest:
She prompts them to her fruits and flower-beds;
Their beauty with her choicest interthreads,
And makes her revel of their merry zest.
As in our East much were it in our West,
If men had risen to do the work of heads.
Her gabbling grey she eyes askant, nor treads
The ways they walk; by what they speak oppressed.
How wrought they in their zenith? 'T is not writ;
Not all; yet she by one sure sign can read:
Have they but held her laws and nature dear,
They mouth no sentence of inverted wit.
More prizes she her beasts than this high breed
Wry in the shape she wastes her milk to rear.

SOCIETY

Historic be the survey of our kind,
And how their brave Society took shape.
Lion, wolf, vulture, fox, jackal and ape,
The strong of limb, the keen of nose, we find,
Who, with some jars in harmony, combined,
Their primal instincts taming, to escape
The brawl indecent, and hot passions drape.
Convenience pricked conscience, that the mind.
Thus entered they the field of milder beasts,
Which in some sort of civil order graze,
And do half-homage to the God of Laws.
But are they still for their old ravenous feasts,
Earth gives the edifice they build no base:
They spring another flood of fangs and claws.

WINTER HEAVENS

Sharp is the night, but stars with frost alive
Leap off the rim of earth across the dome.
It is a night to make the heavens our home
More than the nest whereto apace we strive.
Lengths down our road each fir-tree seems a hive,
It swarms outrushing from the golden comb.
They waken waves of thoughts that burst to foam:
The living throb in me, the dead revive.
Yon mantle clothes us: there, past mortal breath,
Life glistens on the river of the death.
It folds us, flesh and dust; and have we knelt,
Or never knelt, or eyed as kine the springs
Of radiance, the radiance enrings:
And this is the soul's haven to have felt.

WIND ON THE LYRE

THAT was the chirp of Ariel
You heard, as overhead it flew,
The farther going more to dwell,
And wing our green to wed our blue;
But whether note of joy or knell,
Not his own Father-singer knew;
Nor yet can any mortal tell,
Save only how it shivers through;
The breast of us a sounded shell,
The blood of us a lighted dew.

THE YOUTHFUL QUEST

His Lady queen of woods to meet,
He wanders day and night:
The leaves have whisperings discreet,
The mossy ways invite.

Across a lustrous ring of space,
By covert hoods and caves,
Is promise of her secret face
In film that onward waves.

For darkness is the light astrain,
Astrain for light the dark.
A grey moth down a larches' lane
Unwinds a ghostly spark.

Her lamp he sees, and young desire
Is fed while cloaked she flies.
She quivers shot of violet fire
To ash at look of eyes.

THE EMPTY PURSE

A Sermon to our Later Prodigal Son

Thou, run to the dry on this wayside bank,
Too plainly of all the propellers bereft!
Quenched youth, and is that thy purse?
Even such limp slough as the snake has left
Slack to the gale upon spikes of whin,
For cast-off coat of a life gone blank
In its frame of a grin at the seeker, is thine;
And thine to crave and to curse
The sweet thing once within.
Accuse him: some devil committed the theft,
Which leaves of the portly a skin,
No more; of the weighty a whine.

Pursue him: and first, to be sure of his track,
Over devious ways that have led to this,
In the stream's consecutive line,
Let memory lead thee back
To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,
Unflushed at the front of the roseate door
Unopened yet: never shadow there

Of a Tartarus lighted by Dis
For souls whose cry is, alack!
An ivory cradle rocks, apeep
Through his eyelashes' laugh, a breathing pearl.

There the young chief of the animals wore
A likeness to heavenly hosts, unaware
Of his love of himself; with the hours at leap.
In a dingle away from a rutted highroad,
Around him the earliest throstle and merle,
Our human smile between milk and sleep,
Effervescent of Nature he crowed.
Fair was that season; furl over furl
The banners of blossom; a dancing floor
This earth; very angels the clouds; and fair
Thou on the tablets of forehead and breast:
Careless, a centre of vigilant care.
Thy mother kisses an infant curl.
The room of the toys was a boundless nest,
A kingdom the field of the games,
Till entered the craving for more,
And the worshipped small body had aims.
A good little idol, as records attest,
When they tell of him lightly appeased in a scream
By sweets and caresses: he gave but sign,
That the heir of a purse-plumped dominant race,
Accustomed to plenty, not dumb would pine.
Almost magician, his earliest dream
Was lord of the unpossessed
For a look; himself and his chase,

As on puffs of a wind at whirl,
Made one in the wink of a gleam.
She kisses a locket curl,
She conjures to vision a cherub face,
When her butterfly counted his day
All meadow and flowers, mishap
Derided, and taken for play
The fling of an urchin's cap.

When her butterfly showed him an eaglet born,
For preying too heedlessly bred,
What a heart clapped in thee then!
With what fuller colours of morn!
And high to the uttermost heavens it flew,
Swift as on poet's pen.
It flew to be wedded, to wed
The mystery scented around:
Issue of flower and dew,
Issue of light and sound:
Thinner than either; a thread
Spun of the dream they threw
To kindle, allure, evade.
It ran the sea-wave, the garden's dance,
To the forest's dark heart down a dappled glade;
Led on by a perishing glance,
By a twinkle's eternal waylaid.
Woman, the name was, when she took form;
Sheaf of the wonders of life. She fled,
Close imaged; she neared, far seen. How she made
Palpitate earth of the living and dead!

Did she not show thee the world designed
Solely for loveliness? Nested warm,
The day was the morrow in flight. And for thee,
She muted the discords, tuned, refined;
Drowned sharp edges beneath her cloak.
Eye of the waters and throb of the tree,
Sliding on radiance, winging from shade,
With her witch-whisper o'er ruins, in reeds,
She sang low the song of her promise delayed;
Beckoned and died, as a finger of smoke
Astream over woodland. And was not she
History's heroines white on storm?
Remember her summons to valorous deeds.
Shone she a lure of the honey-bag swarm,
Most was her beam on the knightly: she led
For the honours of manhood more than the prize;
    Waved her magnetical yoke
    Whither the warrior bled,
    Ere to the bower of sighs.
And shy of her secrets she was; under deeps
Plunged at the breath of a thirst that woke
The dream in the cave where the Dreaded sleeps.

Away over heaven the young heart flew,
And caught many lustres, till some one said
(Or was it the thought into hearing grew?),
    Not thou as commoner men!
    Thy stature puffed and it swayed,
    It stiffened to royal-erect;
    A brassy trumpet brayed;

A whirling seized thy head;
The vision of beauty was flecked.
Note well the how and the when,
The thing that prompted and sped.

Thereanon the keen passions clapped wing,
Fixed eye, and the world was prey.
No simple world of thy greenblade Spring,
Nor world of thy flowerful prime
On the topmost Orient peak
Above a yet vaporous day.
Flesh was it, breast to beak:
A four-walled windowless world without ray,
Only darkening jets on a river of slime,
Where harsh over music as woodland jay,
A voice chants, Woe to the weak!
And along an insatiate feast,
Women and men are one
In the cup transforming to beast.

Magian worship they paid to their sun,
Lord of the Purse! Behold him climb.
Stalked ever such figure of fun
For monarch in great-grin pantomime?
See now the heart dwindle, the frame distend;
The soul to its anchorite cavern retreat,
From a life that reeks of the rotted end;
While he — is he pictureable? replete,
Gourd-like swells of the rank of the soil,
Hollow, more hollow at core.
And for him did the hundreds toil

Despised; in the cold and heat,
This image ridiculous bore
On their shoulders for morsels of meat!

Gross, with the fumes of incense full,
With parasites tickled, with slaves begirt,
He strutted, a cock, he bellowed, a bull,
He rolled him, a dog, in dirt.
And dog, bull, cock, was he, fanged, horned, plumed;
Original man, as philosophers vouch;
Carnivorous, cannibal; length-long exhumed,
Frightfully living and armed to devour;
The primitive weapons of prey in his pouch;
The bait, the line and the hook:
To feed on his fellows intent.
God of the Danaé shower,
He had but to follow his bent.
He battened on fowl not safely hutched,
On sheep astray from the crook;
A lure for the foolish in fold.
To carrion turning what flesh he touched.

And O the grace of his air,
As he at the goblet sips,
A centre of girdles loosed,
With their grisly label, Sold!
Credulous hears the fidelity swear,
Which has roving eyes over yielded lips:
To-morrow will fancy himself the seduced,
The stuck in a treacherous slough,
Because of his faith in a purchased pair,
False to a vinous vow.

In his glory of banquet strip him bare,
And what is the creature we view?
Our pursy Apollo Apollyon's tool;
A small one, still of the crew
By serpent Apollyon blest:
His plea in apology, blindfold Fool.
A fool surcharged, propelled, unwarmed;
Not viler, you hear him protest:
Of a popular countenance not incorrect.
But deeds are the picture in essence, deeds
Paint him the hooved and horned,
Despite the poor pother he pleads,
And his look of a nation's elect.

We have him, our quarry confessed!
And scan him: the features inspect
Of that bestial multiform: cry,
Corroborate I, O Samian Sage!
The book of thy wisdom, proved
On me, its last hieroglyph page,
Alive in the horned and hooved?
Thou! will he make reply.

Thus has the plenary purse
Done often: to do will engage
Anew upon all of thy like, or worse.

And now is thy deepest regret
To be man, clean rescued from beast:
From the grip of the Sorcerer, Gold,
Celestially released.

But now from his cavernous hold,
Free may thy soul be set,
As a child of the Death and the Life, to learn,
Refreshed by some bodily sweat,
The meaning of either in turn,
What issue may come of the two: —
A morn beyond mornings, beyond all reach
Of emotional arms at the stretch to enfold:
A firmament passing our visible blue.
To those having nought to reflect it, 't is nought;
To those who are misty, 't is mist on the beach
From the billow withdrawing; to those who see
Earth, our mother, in thought,
Her spirit it is, our key.

Ay, the Life and the Death are her words to us here,
Of one significance, pricking the blind.
This is thy gain now the surface is clear:
To read with a soul in the mirror of mind,
Is man's chief lesson. — Thou smilest! I preach!
Acid smiling, my friend, reveals
Abysses within; frigid preaching a street
Paved unconcernedly smooth
For the lecturer straight on his heels,
Up and down a policeman's beat;
Bearing tonics not labelled to soothe.
Thou hast a disgust of the sermon in rhyme.
It is not attractive in being too chaste.
The popular tale of adventure and crime
Would equally sicken an overdone taste.
So, then, onward. Philosophy, thoughtless to soothe,
Lifts, if thou wilt, or there leaves thee supine.

Thy condition, good sooth, has no seeming of sweet;
It walks our first crags, it is flint for the tooth,
For the thirsts of our nature brine.
But manful has met it, manful will meet.
And think of thy privilege: supple with youth,
To have sight of the headlong swine,
Once fouling thee, jumping the dips!
As the coin of thy purse poured out:
An animal's holiday past:
And free of them thou, to begin a new bout;
To start a fresh hunt on a resolute blast:
No more an imp-ridden to bournes of eclipse:
Having knowledge to spur thee, a gift to compare;
Rubbing shoulder to shoulder, as only the book
Of the world can be read, by necessity urged.
For witness, what blinkers are they who look
From the state of the prince or the millionnaire!
They see but the fish they attract,
The hungers on them converged;
And never the thought in the shell of the act,
Nor ever life's fangless mirth.
But first, that the poisonous of thee be purged,
Go into thyself, strike Earth.
She is there, she is felt in a blow struck hard.
Thou findest a pugilist countering quick,
Cunning at drives where thy shutters are barred;
Not, after the studied professional trick,
Blue-sealing; she brightens the sight. Strike Earth,
Antaeus, young giant, whom fortune trips!
And thou com'st on a saving fact,
To nourish thy planted worth.

Be it clay, flint, mud, or the rubble of chips,
Thy roots have grasp in the stern-exact:
The redemption of sinners deluded! the last
Dry handful, that bruises and saves.
To the common big heart are we bound right fast,
When our Mother admonishing nips
At the nakedness bare of a clout,
And we crave what the commonest craves.

This wealth was a fortress-wall,
Under which grew our grim little beast-god stout;
Self-worshipped, the foe, in division from all;
With crowds of illogical Christians, no doubt;
Till the rescuing earthquake cracked.
Thus are we man made firm;
Made warm by the numbers compact.
We follow no longer a trumpet-snout,
At a trot where the hog is tracked,
Nor wriggle the way of the worm.

Thou wilt spare us the cynical pout
At humanity: sign of a nature bechurled.
No stenchy anathemas cast
Upon Providence, women, the world.
Distinguish thy tempers and trim thy wits.
The purchased are things of the mart, not classed
Among resonant types that have freely grown.
Thy knowledge of women might be surpassed:
As any sad dog's of sweet flesh when he quits
The wayside wandering bone!
No revilings of comrades as ingrates: thee

The tempter, misleader, and criminal (screened
By laws yet barbarous) own.
If some one performed Fiend's deputy,
He was for awhile the Fiend.

Still, nursing a passion to speak,
As the punch-bowl does, in the moral vein,
When the ladle has finished its leak,
And the vessel is loquent of nature's inane,
Hie where the demagogues roar
Like a Phalaris bull, with the victim's force:
Hurrah to their jolly attack
On a City that smokes of the Plain;
A city of sin's death-dyes,
Holding revel of worms in a corse;
A city of malady sore,
Over-ripe for the big doom's crack:
A city of hymnical snore;
Connubial truths and lies
Demanding an instant divorce,
Clean as the bright from the black.
It were well for thy system to sermonize.
There are giants to slay, and they call for their Jack.

Then up stand thou in the midst:
Thy good grain out of thee thresh,
Hand upon heart: relate
What things thou legally did'st
For the Archseducer of flesh.
Omitting the murmurs at women and fate,

Confess thee an instrument armed
To be snare of our wanton, our weak,
Of all by the sensual charmed.
For once shall repentance be done by the tongue:
Speak, though execrate, speak
A word on grandmotherly Laws
Giving rivers of gold to our young,
In the days of their hungers impure;
To furnish them beak and claws,
And make them a banquet's lure.

Thou the example, saved
Miraculously by this poor skin!
Thereat let the Purse be waved:
The snake-slough sick of the snaky sin:
A devil, if devil as devil behaved
Ever, thou knowest, look thou but in,
Where he shivers, a culprit fettered and shaved;
O a bird stripped of feather, a fish clipped of fin!

And commend for a washing the torrents of wrath,
Which hurl at the foe of the dearest men prize,
Rough-rolling boulders and froth.
Gigantical enginery they can command,
For the crushing of enemies not of great size:
But hold to thy desperate stand.
Men's right of bequeathing their all to their own
(With little regard for the creatures they squeezed);
Their mill and mill-water and nether mill-stone

Tied fast to their infant; lo, this is the last
Of their hungers, by prudent devices appeased.
The law they decree is their ultimate slave;
Wherein we perceive old Voracity glassed.
It works from their dust, and it reeks of their grave.
Point them to greener, though Journals be guns;
To brotherly fields under fatherly skies;
Where the savage still primitive learns of a debt
He has owed since he drummed on his belly for war;
And how for his giving, the more will he get;
For trusting his fellows, leave friends round his sons.
Till they see, with the gape of a startled surprise,
Their adored tyrant-monster a brute to abhor,
The sun of their system a father of flies!

So, for such good hope, take their scourge unashamed;
'T is the portion of them who civilize,
    Who speak the word novel and true:
How the brutish antique of our springs may be tamed,
Without loss of the strength that should push us to flower;
How the God of old time will act Satan of new,
If we keep him not straight at the higher God aimed;
For whose habitation within us we scour
This house of our life; where our bitterest pains
Are those to eject the Infernal, who heaps
Mire on the soul. Take stripes or chains;
    Grip at thy standard reviled.
And what if our body be dashed from the steeps?
    Our spoken in protest remains.
    A young generation reaps.

The young generation! ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the Ages! to bleed for it, proof
That souls we have, with our senses filed,
Our shuttles at thread of the woof.
May it be braver than ours,
To encounter the rattle of hostile bolts,
To look on the rising of Stranger Powers.
May it know how the mind in expansion revolts
From a nursery Past with dead letters aloof,
And the piping to stupor of Precedents shun,
In a field where the forefather print of the hoof
Is not yet overgrassed by the watering hours,
And should prompt us to Change, as to promise of sun,
Till brain-rule splendidly towers.

For that large light we have laboured and tramped
Thorough forest and bogland, still to perceive
Our animate morning stamped
With the lines of a sombre eve.

A timorous thing ran the innocent hind,
When the wolf was the hypocrite fang under hood,
The snake a lithe lurker up sleeve,
And the lion effulgently ramped.
Then our forefather hoof did its work in the wood,
By right of the better in kind.
But now will it breed yon bestial brood
Three-fold thrice over, if bent to bind,
As the healthy in chains with the sick,
Unto despot usage our issuing mind.
It signifies battle or death's dull knell.

Precedents icily written on high,
Challenge the Tentatives hot to rebel.
Our Mother, who speeds her bloomful quick
For the march, reads which the impediment well.
She smiles when of sapience is their boast.
O loose of the tug between blood run dry
And blood running flame may our offspring run!
May brain democratic be king of the host!
Less then shall the volumes of History tell
Of the step in progression, the slip in relapse,
That counts us a sand-slack inch hard won,
Beneath an oppressive incumbent perhaps.

Let the senile lords in a parchment sky,
And the generous turbulents drunken of morn,
Their battle of instincts put by,
A moment examine this field:
On a Roman street cast thoughtful eye,
Along to the mounts from the bog-forest weald.
It merits a glance at our history's maps,
To see across Britain's old shaggy unshorn,
Through the Parties in strife internecine, foot
The ruler's close-reckoned direct to the mark.
From the head ran the vanquisher's orderly route,
In the stride of his forts through the tangle and dark.
From the head runs the paved firm way for advance,
And we shoulder, we wrangle! The light on us shed,
Shows dense beetle blackness in swarm, lurid Chance,
The Goddess of gamblers, above. From the head,
Then when it worked for the birth of a star
Fraternal with heaven's in beauty and ray,

Sprang the Acropolis. Ask what crown
Comes of our tides of the blood at war,
For men to bequeath generations down!
And ask what thou wast when the Purse was brimmed:
What high-bounding ball for the Gods at play:
A Conservative youth! who the cream-bowl skimmed,
Desiring affairs to be left as they are.

So, thou takest Youth's natural place in the fray,
As a Tentative, combating Peace,
Our lullaby word for decay. —
There will come an immediate decree
In thy mind for the opposite party's decease,
If he bends not an instant knee.
Expunge it: extinguishing counts poor gain.
And accept a mild word of police: —
Be mannerly, measured; refrain
From the puffings of him of the bagpipe cheeks.
Our political, even as the merchant main,
A temperate gale requires
For the ship that haven seeks;
Neither God of the winds nor his bellowsy squires.

Then observe the antagonist, con
His reasons for rocking the lullaby word.
You stand on a different stage of the stairs.
He fought certain battles, yon senile lord.
In the strength of thee, feel his bequest to his heirs.
We are now on his inches of ground hard won,
For a perch to a flight o'er his resting fence.

Does it knock too hard at thy head if I say,
That Time is both father and son?
Tough lesson, when senses are floods over sense!—
Discern the paternal of Now
As the Then of thy present tense.
You may pull as you will either way,
You can never be other than one.
So, be filial. Giants to slay,
Demand knowing eyes in their Jack.
There are those whom we push from the path with respect.
Bow to that elder, though seeing him bow
To the backward as well, for a thunderous back
Upon thee. In his day he was not all wrong.
Unto some foundered zenith he strove, and was wrecked.
He scrambled to shore with a worship of shore.
The Future he sees as the slippery murk;
The Past as his doctrinal library lore.
He stands now the rock to the wave's wild wash.
Yet thy lumpish antagonist once did work
Heroical, one of our strong.
His gold to retain and his dross reject,
Engage him, but humour, not aiming to quash.
Detest the dead squat of the Turk,
And suffice it to move him along.

Drink of faith in the brains a full draught
Before the oration: beware
Lest rhetoric moonily waft
Whither horrid activities snare.
Rhetoric, juice for the mob
Despising more luminous grape,

Oft at its fount has it laughed
In the cataracts rolling for rape
Of a Reason left single to sob!

'T is known how the permanent never is writ
In blood of the passions: mercurial they,
Shifty their issue: stir not that pit
To the game our brutes best play.

But with rhetoric loose, can we check man's brute?
Assemblies of men on their legs invoke
Excitement for wholesome diversion: there shoot
Electrical sparks between their dry thatch
And thy waved torch, more to kindle than light.
'T is instant between you: the trick of a catch
(To match a Batrachian croak)
Will thump them a frenzy or fun in their veins.
Then may it be rather the well-worn joke
Thou repeatest, to stop conflagration, and write
Penance for rhetoric. Strange will it seem,
When thou readest that form of thy homage to brains!

For the secret why demagogues fail,
Though they carry hot mobs to the red extreme,
And knock out or knock in the nail
(We will rank them as flatly sincere,
Devoutly detesting a wrong,
Engines o'ercharged with our human steam),
Question thee, seething amid the throng.
And ask, whether Wisdom is born of blood-heat;
Or of other than Wisdom comes victory here; —
Aught more than the banquet and roundelay,

That is closed with a terrible terminal wail,
A retributive black ding-dong?
And ask of thyself: This furious Yea
Of a speech I thump to repeat,
In the cause I would have prevail,
For seed of a nourishing wheat,
Is it accepted of Song?
Does it sound to the mind through the ear,
Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?
Thou wilt find it a test severe;
Unerring whatever the theme.
Rings it for Reason a melody clear,
We have bidden old Chaos retreat;
We have called on Creation to hear;
All forces that make us are one full stream.

Simple islander! thus may the spirit in verse,
Showing its practical value and weight,
Pipe to thee clear from the Empty Purse,
Lead thee aloft to that high estate. —
The test is conclusive, I deem:
It embraces or mortally bites.
We have then the key-note for debate:
A Senate that sits on the heights
Over discords, to shape and amend.

And no singer is needed to serve
The musical God, my friend.
Needs only his law on a sensible nerve:
A law that to Measure invites,
Forbidding the passions contend.

Is it accepted of Song ?
And if then the blunt answer be Nay,
Dislink thee sharp from the ramping horde,
Slaves of the Goddess of hoar-old sway,
The Queen of delirous rites,
Queen of those issueless mobs, that rend
For frenzy the strings of a fruitful accord,
Pursuing insensate, seething in throng,
Their wild idea to its ashen end.
Off to their Phrygia, shriek and gong,
Shorn from their fellows, behold them wend!

But thou, should the answer ring Ay,
Hast warrant of seed for thy word:
The musical God is nigh
To inspirit and temper, tune it, and steer
Through the shoals: is it worthy of Song,
There are souls all woman to hear,
Woman to bear and renew.
For he is the Master of Measure, and weighs,
Broad as the arms of his blue,
Fine as the web of his rays,
Justice, whose voice is a melody clear,
The one sure life for the numbered long.
From him are the brutal and vain,
The vile, the excessive, out-thrust:
He points to the God on the upmost throne:
He is the saver of grain,
The sifter of spirit from dust.
He, Harmony, tells how to Measure pertain
The virilities: Measure alone
Has votaries rich in the male:

Fathers embracing no cloud,
Sowing no harvestless main:
Alike by the flesh and the spirit endowed
To create, to perpetuate; woo, win, wed;
Send progeny streaming, have earth for their own,
Over-run the insensates, disperse with a puff
Simulacra, though solid they sail,
And seem such imperial stuff:
Yes, the living divide off the dead.

Then thou with thy furies outgrown,
Not as Cybele's beast will thy head lash tail
So præter-determinedly thermonous,
Nor thy cause be an Attis far fled.
Thou under stress of the strife,
Shalt hear for sustainment supreme,
The cry of the conscience of Life:
Keep the young generations in hail,
And bequeath them no tumbled house!

There hast thou the sacred theme,
Therein the inveterate spur,
Of the Innermost. See her one blink
In vision past eyeballs. Not thee
She cares for, but us. Follow her.
Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.
With thy soul the Life espouse:
This Life of the visible, audible, ring
With thy love tight about; and no death will be;
The name be an empty thing,
And woe a forgotten old trick:
And battle will come as a challenge to drink;

As a warrior's wound each transient sting.
She leads to the Uppermost link by link;
Exacts but vision, desires not vows.
Above us the singular number to see;
The plural warm round us; ourself in the thick,
A dot or a stop: that is our task;
Her lesson in figured arithmetic,
For the letters of Life behind its mask;
Her flower-like look under fearful brows.

As for thy special case, O my friend, one must think
Massilia's victim, who held the carouse
For the length of a carnival year,
Knew worse: but the wretch had his opening choice.
For thee, by our law, no alternatives were:
Thy fall was assured ere thou camest to a voice.

He cancelled the ravaging Plague,
With the roll of his fat off the cliff.
Do thou with thy lean as the weapon of ink,
Though they call thee an angler who fishes the vague
And catches the not too pink,
Attack one as murderous, knowing thy cause
Is the cause of community. Iterate,
Iterate, iterate, harp on the trite:
Our preacher to win is the supple in stiff:
Yet always in measure, with bearing polite:
The manner of one that would expiate
His share in grandmotherly Laws,
Which do the dark thing to destroy,
Under aspect of water so guilelessly white
For the general use, by the devils befouled.

Enough, poor prodigal boy!
Thou hast listened with patience; another had howled.
Repentance is proved, forgiveness is earned.
And 't is bony: denied thee thy succulent half
Of the parable's blessing to swineherd returned:
A Sermon thy slice of the Scriptural calf!

By my faith, there is feasting to come,
Not the less, when our Earth we have seen
Beneath and on surface, her deeds and designs:
Who gives us the man-loving Nazarene,
The martyrs, the poets, the corn and the vines.
By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom;
Revelations, delights. I can hear a faint crow
Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct;
As down the new shafting of mines,
A cry of the metally gnome.
When our Earth we have seen, and have linked
With the home of the Spirit to whom we unfold,
Imprisoned humanity open will throw
Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold
For the congregate friendliness flow.
Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold:
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real:
And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst
At the flooding of light. No robbery then
The feast, nor a robber's abode the home,
For a furnished model of our first den!
Nor Life as a stationed wheel;
Nor History written in blood or in foam,
For vendetta of Parties in cursing accursed.

The God in the conscience of multitudes feel,
And we feel deep to Earth at her heart,
We have her communion with men,
New ground, new skies for appeal.
Yield into harness thy best and thy worst;
Away on the trot of thy servitude start,
Through the rigours and joys and sustainments of air.
If courage should falter, 't is wholesome to kneel.
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities tower-like stand.
I promise not more, save that feasting will come
To a mind and a body no longer inversed:
The sense of large charity over the land,
Earth's wheaten of wisdom dispensed in the rough,
And a bell ringing thanks for a sustenance meal
Through the active machine: lean fare,
But it carries a sparkle! And now enough,
And part we as comrades part,
To meet again never or some day or soon.

Our season of drought is reminder rude:—
No later than yesternoon,
I looked on the horse of a cart,
By the wayside water-trough.
How at every draught of his bride of thirst
His nostrils widened! The sight was good:
Food for us, food, such as first
Drew our thoughts to earth's lowly for food.

JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE

I

A REVELATION came on Jane,
The widow of a labouring swain:
And first her body trembled sharp,
Then all the woman was a harp
With winds along the strings; she heard,
Though there was neither tone nor word.

II

For past our hearing was the air,
Beyond our speaking what it bare,
And she within herself had sight
Of heaven at work to cleanse outright,
To make of her a mansion fit
For angel hosts inside to sit.

III

They entered, and forthwith entranced,
Her body braced, her members danced;
Surprisingly the woman leapt;
And countenance composed she kept;
As gossip neighbours in the lane
Declared, who saw and pitied Jane.

IV

These knew she had been reading books,
The which was witnessed by her looks
Of late: she had a mania
For mad folk in America,
And said for sure they led the way,
But meat and beer were meant to stay.

V

That she had visited a fair,
Had seen a gauzy lady there,
Alive with tricks on legs alone,
As good as wings, was also known:
And longwhiles in a sullen mood,
Before her jumping, Jane would brood.

VI

A good knee's height, they say, she sprang;
Her arms and feet like those who hang:
As if afire the body sped,
And neither pair contributed.
She jumped in silence: she was thought
A corpse to resurrection caught.

VII

The villagers were mostly dazed;
They jeered, they wondered, and they praised.
'T was guessed by some she was inspired,
And some would have it she had hired
An engine in her petticoats,
To turn their wits and win their votes.

VIII

Her first was Winny Earnes, a kind
Of woman not to dance inclined;
But she went up, entirely won,
Ere Jump-to-glory Jane had done;
And once a vixen wild for speech,
She found the better way to preach.

IX

No long time after, Jane was seen
Directing jumps at Daddy Green;
And that old man, to watch her fly,
Had eyebrows made of arches high;
Till homeward he likewise did hop,
Oft calling on himself to stop!

X

It was a scene when man and maid,
Abandoning all other trade,
And careless of the call to meals,
Went jumping at the woman's heels.
By dozens they were counted soon,
Without a sound to tell their tune.

XI

Along the roads they came, and crossed
The fields, and o'er the hills were lost,
And in the evening reappeared;
Then short like hobbled horses reared,
And down upon the grass they plumped:
Alone their Jane to glory jumped.

XII

At morn they rose, to see her spring
All going as an engine thing;
And lighter than the gossamer
She led the bobbers following her,
Past old acquaintances, and where
They made the stranger stupid stare.

XIII

When turnips were a filling crop,
In scorn they jumped a butcher's shop:
Or, spite of threats to flog and souse,
They jumped for shame a public-house:
And much their legs were seized with rage
If passing by the vicarage.

XIV

The tightness of a hempen rope
Their bodies got; but laundry soap
Not handsomer can rub the skin
For token of the washed within.
Occasionally coughers cast
A leg aloft and coughed their last.

XV

The weaker maids and some old men,
Requiring rafters for the pen
On rainy nights, were those who fell.
The rest were quite a miracle,
Refreshed as you may search all round
On Club-feast days and cry, Not found!

XVI

For these poor innocents, that slept
Against the sky, soft women wept:
For never did they any theft;
'T was known when they their camping left,
And jumped the cold out of their rags;
In spirit rich as money-bags.

XVII

They jumped the question, jumped reply;
And whether to insist, deny,
Reprove, persuade, they jumped in ranks
Or singly, straight the arms to flanks,
And straight the legs, with just a knee
For bending in a mild degree.

XVIII

The villagers might call them mad;
An endless holiday they had,
Of pleasure in a serious work:
They taught by leaps where perils lurk,
And with the lambkins practised sports
For 'scaping Satan's pounds and quarts.

XIX

It really seemed on certain days,
When they bobbed up their Lord to praise,
And bobbing up they caught the glance
Of light, our secret is to dance,
And hold the tongue from hindering peace;
To dance out preacher and police.

XX

Those flies of boys disturbed them sore
On Sundays and when daylight wore:
With withies cut from hedge or copse,
They treated them as whipping-tops,
And flung big stones with cruel aim;
Yet all the flock jumped on the same.

XXI

For what could persecution do
To worry such a blessed crew,
On whom it was as wind to fire,
Which set them always jumping higher?
The parson and the lawyer tried,
By meek persistency defied.

XXII

But if they bore, they could pursue
As well, and this the Bishop too;
When inner warnings proved him plain
The chase for Jump-to-glory Jane.
She knew it by his being sent
To bless the feasting in the tent.

XXIII

Not less than fifty years on end,
The Squire had been the Bishop's friend:
And his poor tenants, harmless ones,
With souls to save! fed not on buns,
But angry meats: she took her place
Outside to show the way to grace.

XXIV

In apron suit the Bishop stood;
The crowding people kindly viewed.
A gaunt grey woman he saw rise
On air, with most beseeching eyes:
And evident as light in dark
It was, she set to him for mark.

XXV

Her highest leap had come: with ease
She jumped to reach the Bishop's knees:
Compressing tight her arms and lips,
She sought to jump the Bishop's hips:
Her aim flew at his apron-band,
That he might see and understand.

XXVI

The mild inquiry of his gaze
Was altered to a peaked amaze,
At sight of thirty in ascent;
To gain his notice clearly bent:
And greatly Jane at heart was vexed
By his ploughed look of mind perplexed.

XXVII

In jumps that said, Beware the pit!
More eloquent than speaking it —
That said, Avoid the boiled, the roast;
The heated nose on face of ghost,
Which comes of drinking: up and o'er
The flesh with me! did Jane implore.

XXVIII

She jumped him high as huntsmen go
Across the gate; she jumped him low,
To coax him to begin and feel
His infant steps returning, peel
His mortal pride, exposing fruit,
And off with hat and apron suit.

XXIX

We need much patience, well she knew,
And out and out, and through and through,
When we would gentlefolk address,
However we may seek to bless:
At times they hide them like the beasts
From sacred beams; and mostly priests.

XXX

He gave no sign of making bare,
Nor she of faintness or despair.
Inflamed with hope that she might win,
If she but coaxed him to begin,
She used all arts for making fain;
The mother with her babe was Jane.

XXXI

Now stamped the Squire, and knowing not
Her business, waved her from the spot.
Encircled by the men of might,
The head of Jane, like flickering light,
As in a charger, they beheld
Ere she was from the park expelled.

XXXII

Her grief, in jumps of earthly weight,
Did Jane around communicate:
For that the moment when began
The holy but mistaken man,
In view of light, to take his lift,
They cut him from her charm adrift!

XXXIII

And he was lost: a banished face
For ever from the ways of grace,
Unless pinched hard by dreams in fright.
They saw the Bishop's wavering sprite
Within her look, at come and go,
Long after he had caused her woe.

XXXIV

Her greying eyes (until she sank
At Fredsham on the wayside bank,
Like cinder heaps that whitened lie
From coals that shot the flame to sky)
Had glassy vacancies, which yearned
For one in memory discerned.

XXXV

May those who ply the tongue that cheats,
And those who rush to beer and meats,
And those whose mean ambition aims
At palaces and titled names,
Depart in such a cheerful strain
As did our Jump-to-glory Jane!

XXXVI

Her end was beautiful: one sigh.
She jumped a foot when it was nigh.
A lily in a linen clout
She looked when they had laid her out.
It is a lily-light she bears
For England up the ladder-stairs.

ODES

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Sword of Common Sense! —
Our surest gift: the sacred chain
Of man to man: firm earth for trust
In structures vowed to permanence: —
Thou guardian issue of the harvest brain!
Implacable perforce of just;
With that good treasure in defence,
Which is our gold crushed out of joy and pain
Since first men planted foot and hand was king:
Bright, nimble of the marrow-nerve
To wield thy double edge, retort
Or hold the deadlier reserve,
And through thy victim's weapon sting:
Thine is the service, thine the sport
This shifty heart of ours to hunt
Across its webs and round the many a ring
Where fox it is, or snake, or mingled seeds
Occasion heats to shape, or the poor smoke
Struck from a puff-ball, or the troughster's grunt;
Once lion of our desert's trodden weeds;
And but for thy straight finger at the yoke,

Again to be the lordly paw,
Naming his appetites his needs,
Behind a decorative cloak:
Thou, of the highest, the unwritten Law
We read upon that building's architrave
In the mind's firmament, by men upraised
With sweat of blood when they had quitted cave
For fellowship, and rearward looked amazed,
Where the prime motive gapes a lurid jaw,
Thou, soul of wakened heads, art armed to warn,
Restrain, lest we backslide on whence we sprang,
Scarce better than our dwarf beginning shoot,
Of every gathered pearl and blossom shorn;
Through thee, in novel wiles to win disguise,
Seen are the pits of the disruptor, seen
His rebel agitation at our root:
Thou hast him out of hawking eyes;
Nor ever morning of the clang
Young Echo sped on hill from horn
In forest blown when scent was keen
Off earthy dews besprinkling blades
Of covert grass more merrily rang
The yelp of chase down alleys green,
Forth of the headlong-pouring glades,
Over the dappled fallows wild away,
Than thy fine unaccented scorn
At sight of man's old secret brute,
Devout for pasture on his prey,
Advancing, yawning to devour;
With step of deer, with voice of flute,
Haply with visage of the lily flower.

Let the cock crow and ruddy morn
His handmaiden appear! Youth claims his hour.
The generously ludicrous
Espouses it. But see we sons of day,
On whom Life leans for guidance in our fight,
Accept the throb for lord of us;
For lord, for the main central light
That gives direction, not the eclipse; —
Or dost thou look where niggard Age,
Demanding reverence for wrinkles, whips
A tumbled top to grind a wolf's worn tooth; —
Hoar despot on our final stage,
In dotage of a stunted Youth; —
Or it may be some venerable sage,
Not having thee awake in him, compact
Of wisdom else, the breast's old tempter trips;
Or see we ceremonial state,
Robing the gilded beast, exact
Abjection, while the crackskull name of Fate
Is used to stamp and hallow printed fact;
A cruel corner lengthens up thy lips;
These are thy game wherever men engage:
These and, majestic in a borrowed shape,
The major and the minor potentate,
Creative of their various ape; —
The tiptoe mortals triumphing to write
Upon a perishable page
An inch above their fellows' height; —
The criers of foregone wisdom, who impose
Its slough on live conditions, much for the greed
Of our first hungry figure wide agape; —

Call up thy hounds of laughter to their run.
These, that would have men still of men be foes,
Eternal fox to prowl and pike to feed;
Would keep our life the whirly pool
Of turbid stuff dishonouring History;
The herd the drover's herd, the fool the fool,
Ourself our slavish self's infernal sun;
These are the children of the heart untaught
By thy quick founts to beat abroad, by thee
Untamed to tone its passions under thought,
The rich humaneness reading in thy fun.
Of them a world of coltish heels for school,
We have; a world with driving wrecks bestrewn.

. . . . . .

'T is written of the Gods of human mould,
Those Nectar Gods, of glorious stature hewn
To quicken hymns, that they did hear incensed,
Satiric comments overbold,
From one whose part was by decree
The jester's; but they boiled to feel him bite.
Better for them had they with Reason fenced
Or smiled corrected! They in the great Gods' might,
Their prober crushed, as fingers flea.
Crumbled Olympus when the sovereign sire
His fatal kick to Momus gave, albeit
Men could behold the sacred Mount aspire,
The Satirist pass by on limping feet.
Those Gods who saw the ejected laugh alight
Below, had then their last of airy glee;
They in the cup sought Laughter's drownèd sprite,

Fed to dire fatness off uncurbed conceit.
Eyes under saw them waddle on their Mount,
And drew them down; to flattest earth they rolled.
This know we veritable. O Sage of Mirth!
Can it be true, the story men recount
Of the fall'n plight of the great Gods on earth?
How they being deathless, though of human mould,
With human cravings, undecaying frames,
Must labour for subsistence; are a band
Whom a loose-cheeked, wide-lipped gay cripple leads
At haunts of holiday on summer sand:
And lightly he will hint to one that heeds,
Names in pained designation of them, names
Ensphered on blue skies and on black, which twirl
Our hearing madly from our seeing dazed,
Add Bacchus unto both; and he entreats
(His baby dimples in maternal chaps
Running wild labyrinths of line and curl)
Compassion for his masterful Trombone,
Whose thunder is the brass of how he blazed
Of old: for him of the mountain-muscle feats,
Who guts a drum to fetch a snappish groan:
For his fierce bugler horning onset, whom
A truncheon-battered helmet caps. . . .
The creature is of earnest mien
To plead a sorrow darker than the tomb.
His Harp and Triangle, in tone subdued,
He names; they are a rayless red and white;
The dawn-hued libertine, the gibbous prude.
And, if we recognize his Tambourine,
He asks; exhausted names her: she has become

A globe in cupolas; the blowsiest queen
Of overflowing dome on dome;
Redundancy contending with the tight,
Leaping the dam! He fondly calls, his girl,
The buxom tripper with the goblet-smile,
Refreshful. O but now his brows are dun,
Bunched are his lips, as when distilling guile,
To drop his venomous: the Dame of dames,
Flower of the world, that honey one,
She of the earthly rose in the sea-pearl,
To whom the world ran ocean for her kiss;
He names her, as a worshipper he names,
And indicates with a contemptuous thumb.
The lady meanwhile lures the mob, alike
Ogles the bursters of the horn and drum.
Curtain her close! her open arms
Have suckers for beholders: she to this?
For that she could not, save in fury, hear
A sharp corrective utterance flick
Her idle manners, for the laugh to strike
Beauty so breeding beauty, without peer
Above the snows, among the flowers? She reaps
This mouldy garner of the fatal kick?
Gross with the sacrifice of Circe-swarms,
Astarte of vile sweets that slay, malign,
From Greek resplendent to Phœnician foul,
The trader in attractions sinks, all brine
To thoughts of taste; is 't love? — bark, dog! hoot, owl!
And she is blushless: ancient worship weeps.
Suicide Graces dangle down the charms
Sprawling like gourds on outer garden-heaps.

She stands in her unholy oily leer
A statue losing feature, weather-sick
Mid draggled creepers of twined ivy sere.
The curtain cried for magnifies to see! —
We cannot quench our one corrupting glance:
The vision of the rumour will not flee.
Doth the Boy own such Mother? — shoot his dart
To bring her, countless as the crested deeps,
Her subjects of the uncorrected heart?
False is that vision, shrieks the devotee;
Incredible, we echo; and anew
Like a far growling lightning-cloud it leaps.
Low humourist this leader seems; perchance
Pitched from his University career,
Adept at classic fooling. Yet of mould
Human those Gods were: deathless too:
On high they not as meditatives paced:
Prodigiously they did the deeds of flesh:
Descending, they would touch the lowest here:
And she, that lighted form of blue and gold,
Whom the seas gave, all earth, all earth embraced;
Exulting in the great hauls of her mesh;
Desired and hated, desperately dear;
Most human of them was. No more pursue!
Enough that the black story can be told.
It preaches to the eminently placed:
For whom disastrous wreckage is nigh due,
Paints omen. Truly they our throbber had;
The passions plumping, passions playing leech,
Cunning to trick us for the day's good cheer.
Our uncorrected human heart will swell

To notions monstrous, doings mad
As billows on a foam-lashed beach;
Borne on the tides of alternating heats,
Will drug the brain, will doom the soul as well;
Call the closed mouth of that harsh final Power
To speak in judgement: Nemesis, the fell:
Of those bright Gods assembled, offspring sour;
The last surviving on the upper seats;
As with men Reason when their hearts rebel.

Ah, what a fruitless breeder is this heart,
Full of the mingled seeds, each eating each.
Not wiser of our mark than at the start,
It surges like the wrath-faced father Sea
To countering winds; a force blind-eyed,
On endless rounds of aimless reach;
Emotion for the source of pride,
The grounds of faith in fixity
Above our flesh; its cravings urging speech,
Inspiring prayer; by turns a lump
Swung on a time-piece, and by turns
A quivering energy to jump
For seats angelical: it shrinks, it yearns,
Loves, loathes; is flame or cinders; lastly cloud
Capping a sullen crater: and mankind
We see cloud-capped, an army of the dark,
Because of thy straight leadership declined;
At heels of this or that delusive spark:
Now when the multitudinous races press
Elbow to elbow hourly more,

A thickened host; when now we hear aloud
Life for the very life implore
A signal of a visioned mark;
Light of the mind, the mind's discourse,
The rational in graciousness,
Thee by acknowledgement enthroned,
To tame and lead that blind-eyed force
In harmony of harness with the crowd,
For payment of their dues; as yet disowned,
Save where some dutiful lone creature, vowed
To holy work, deems it the heart's intent;
Or where a silken circle views it cowled,
The seeming figure of concordance, bent
On satiating tyrant lust
Or barren fits of sentiment.

Thou wilt not have our paths befouled
By simulation; are we vile to view,
The heavens shall see us clean of our own dust,
Beneath thy breezy flitting wing:
They make their mirror upon faces true;
And where they win reflection, lucid heave
The under tides of this hot heart seen through.
Beneficently wilt thou clip
All oversteppings of the plumed,
The puffed, and bid the masker strip,
And into the crowned windbag thrust,
Tearing the mortal from the vital thing,
A lightning o'er the half-illumed,
Who to base brute-dominion cleave,

Yet mark effects, and shun the flash,
Till their drowsed wits a beam conceive,
To spy a wound without a gash,
The magic in a turn of wrist,
And how are wedded heart and head regaled
When Wit o'er Folly blows the mort,
And their high note of union spreads
Wide from the timely word with conquest charged;
Victorious laughter, of no loud report,
If heard; derision as divinely veiled
As terrible Immortals in rose-mist,
Given to the vision of arrested men:
Whereat they feel within them weave
Community its closer threads,
And are to our fraternal state enlarged;
Like warm fresh blood is their enlivened ken:
They learn that thou art not of alien sort,
Speaking the tongue by vipers hissed,
Or of the frosty heights unscaled,
Or of the vain who simple speech distort,
Or of the vapours pointing on to nought
Along cold skies; though sharp and high thy pitch:
As when sole homeward the belated treads,
And hears aloft a clamour wailed,
That once had seemed the broomstick witch
Horridly violating cloud for drought:
He from the rub of minds dispersing fears,
Hears migrants marshalling their midnight train;
Homeliest order in black sky appears,
Not less than in the lighted village steads.
So do those half-illumed wax clear to share

A cry that is our common voice; the note
Of fellowship upon a loftier plane,
Above embattled castle-wall and moat;
And toning drops as from pure heaven it sheds.
So thou for washing a phantasmal air,
For thy sweet singing keynote of the wise,
Laughter — the joy of Reason seeing fade
Obstruction into Earth's renewing beds,
Beneath the stroke of her good servant's blade —
Thenceforth art as their earth-star hailed;
Gain of the years, conjunction's prize.
The greater heart in thy appeal to heads,
They see, thou Captain of our civil Fort!
By more elusive savages assailed
On each ascending stage; untired
Both inner foe and outer to cut short,
And blow to chaff pretenders void of grist:
Showing old tiger's claws, old crocodile's
Yard-grin of eager grinders, slim to sight,
Like forms in running water, oft when smiles,
When pearly tears, when fluent lips delight:
But never with the slayer's malice fired:
As little as informs an infant's fist
Clenched at the sneeze! Thou would'st but have us be
Good sons of mother soil, whereby to grow
Branching on fairer skies, one stately tree;
Broad of the tilth for flowering at the Court:
Which is the tree bound fast to wave its tress;
Of strength controlled sheer beauty to bestow.
Ambrosial heights of possible acquist,
Where souls of men with soul of man consort,

And all look higher to new loveliness
Begotten of the look: thy mark is there;
While on our temporal ground alive,
Rightly though fearfully thou wieldest sword,
Of finer temper now a numbered learn
That they resisting thee themselves resist;
And not thy bigger joy to smite and drive,
Prompt the dense herd to butt, and set the snare
Witching them into pitfalls for hoarse shouts.
More now, and hourly more, and of the Lord
Thou lead'st to, doth this rebel heart discern,
When pinched ascetic and red sensualist
Alternately recurrent freeze or burn,
And of its old religions it has doubts.
It fears thee less when thou hast shown it bare;
Less hates, part understands, nor much resents,
When the prized objects it has raised for prayer,
For fitful prayer; — repentance dreading fire,
Impelled by aches; the blindness which repents
Like the poor trampled worm that writhes in mire; —
Are sounded by thee, and thou darest probe
Old Institutions and Establishments,
Once fortresses against the floods of sin,
For what their worth; and questioningly prod
For why they stand upon a racing globe,
Impeding blocks, less useful than the clod;
Their angel out of them, a demon in.

This half-enlightened heart, still doomed to fret,
To hurl at vanities, to drift in shame
Of gain or loss, bewailing the sure rod,

Shall of predestination wed thee yet.
Something it gathers of what things should drop
At entrance on new times; of how thrice broad
The world of minds communicative; how
A straggling Nature classed in school, and scored
With stripes admonishing, may yield to plough
Fruitfullest furrows, nor for waxing tame
Be feeble on an Earth whose gentler crop
Is its most living, in the mind that steers,
By Reason led, her way of tree and flame,
Beyond the genuflexions and the tears;
Upon an Earth that cannot stop,
Where upward is the visible aim,
And ever we espy the greater God,
For simple pointing at a good adored:
Proof of the closer neighbourhood. Head on,
Sword of the many, light of the few! untwist
Or cut our tangles till fair space is won
Beyond a briared wood of austere brow,
Relieved of discord by thy timely word
At intervals refreshing life: for thou
Art verily Keeper of the Muse's Key;
Thyself no vacant melodist;
On lower land elective even as she;
Holding, as she, all dissonance abhorred;
Advising to her measured steps in flow;
And teaching how for being subjected free
Past thought of freedom we may come to know
The music of the meaning of Accord.

YOUTH IN MEMORY

Days, when the ball of our vision
Had eagles that flew unabashed to sun;
When the grasp on the bow was decision,
And arrow and hand and eye were one;
When the Pleasures, like waves to a swimmer,
Came heaving for rapture ahead! —
Invoke them, they dwindle, they glimmer
As lights over mounds of the dead.

Behold the winged Olympus, off the mead,
With thunder of wide pinions, lightning speed,
Wafting the shepherd-boy through ether clear,
To bear the golden nectar-cup.
So flies desire at view of its delight,
When the young heart is tiptoe perched on sight.
We meanwhile who in hues of the sick year,
The Spring-time paint to prick us for our lost,
Mount but the fatal half way up,
Whereon shut eyes! This is decreed,
For Age that would to youthful heavens ascend,
By passion for the arms' possession tossed,

It falls the way of sighs and hath their end;
A spark gone out to more sepulchral night.
Good if the arrowy eagle of the height,
Be then the little bird that hops to feed.

Lame falls the cry to kindle days
Of radiant orb and daring gaze.
It does but clank our mortal chain.
For Earth reads through her felon old,
The many-numbered of her fold,
Who forward tottering backward strain,
And would be thieves of treasure spent,
With their grey season soured.
She could write out their history in their thirst
To have again the much devoured,
And be the bud at burst;
In honey fancy join the flow,
Where Youth swims on as once they went,
All choiric for spontaneous glee
Of active eager lungs and thews;
They now bared roots beside the river bent;
Whose privilege themselves to see;
Their place in yonder tideway know;
The current glass peruse;
The depths intently sound;
And sapped by each returning flood,
Accept for monitory nourishment,
Those worn roped features under crust of mud,
Reflected in the silvery smooth around:
Not less the branching and high singing tree,
A home of nests, a landmark and a tent,

Until their hour for losing hold on ground.
Even such good harvest of the things that flee,
Earth offers her subjected, and they choose
Rather of Bacchic Youth one beam to drink,
And warm slow marrow with the sensual wink.
So block they at her source the Mother of the Muse.

Who cheerfully the little bird becomes,
Without a fall, and pipes for peck at crumbs,
May have her dolings to the lightest touch;
As where some cripple muses by his crutch,
Unwitting that the spirit in him sings:
'When I had legs, then had I wings,
As good as any born of eggs,
To feed on all aërial things,
When I had legs!'
And if not to embrace he sighs,
She gives him breath of Youth awhile,
Perspective of a breezy mile,
Companionable hedgeways, lifting skies;
Scenes where his nested dreams upon their hoard
Brooded, or up to empyrean soared:
Enough to link him with a dotted line.
But cravings for an eagle's flight,
To top white peaks and serve wild wine
Among the rosy undecayed,
Bring only flash of shade
From her full throbbing breast of day in night.
By what they crave are they betrayed:
And cavernous is that young dragon's jaw,
Crimson for all the fiery reptile saw

In time now coveted, for teeth to flay,
Once more consume, were Life recurrent May.
They to their moment of drawn breath,
Which is the life that makes the death,
The death that makes ethereal life would bind:
The death that breeds the spectre do they find.
Darkness is wedded and the waste regrets
Beating as dead leaves on a fitful gust,
By souls no longer dowered to climb
Beneath their pack of dust,
Whom envy of a lustrous prime,
Eclipsed while yet invoked, besets,
And dooms to sink and water sable flowers,
That never gladdened eye or loaded bee.
Strain we the arms for Memory's hours,
We are the seized Persephone.

Responsive never to the soft desire
For one prized tune is this our chord of life.
'T is clipped to deadness with a wanton knife,
In wishes that for ecstasies aspire.
Yet have we glad companionship of Youth,
Elysian meadows for the mind,
Dare we to face deeds done, and in our tomb
Filled with the parti-coloured bloom
Of loved and hated, grasp all human truth
Sowed by us down the mazy paths behind.
To feel that heaven must we that hell sound through:
Whence comes a line of continuity,
That brings our middle station into view,
Between those poles; a novel Earth we see,

In likeness of us, made of banned and blest;
The sower's bed, but not the reaper's rest:
An Earth alive with meanings, wherein meet
Buried, and breathing, and to be.
Then of the junction of the three,
Even as a heart in brain, full sweet
May sense of soul, the sum of music, beat.

Only the soul can walk the dusty track
Where hangs our flowering under vapours black,
And bear to see how these pervade, obscure,
Quench recollection of a spacious pure.
They take phantasmal forms, divide, convolve,
Hard at each other point and gape,
Horrible ghosts! in agony dissolve,
To reappear with one they drape
For criminal, and, Father! shrieking name,
Who such distorted issue did beget.
Accept them, them and him, though hiss thy sweat
Off brow on breast, whose furnace flame
Has eaten, and old Self consumes.
Out of the purification will they leap,
Thee renovating while new light illumes
The dusky web of evil, known as pain,
That heavily up healthward mounts the steep;
Our fleshly road to beacon-fire of brain:
Midway the tameless oceanic brute
Below, whose heave is topped with foam for fruit,
And the fair heaven reflecting inner peace
On righteous warfare, that asks not to cease.

Forth of such passage through black fire we win
Clear hearing of the simple lute,
Whereon, and not on other, Memory plays
For them who can in quietness receive
Her restorative airs: a ditty thin
As note of hedgerow bird in ear of eve,
Or wave at ebb, the shallow catching rays
On a transparent sheet, where curves a glass
To truer heavens than when the breaker neighs
Loud at the plunge for bubbly wreck in roar.
Solidity and bulk and martial brass,
Once tyrants of the senses, faintly score
A mark on pebbled sand or fluid slime,
While present in the spirit, vital there,
Are things that seemed the phantoms of their time;
Eternal as the recurrent cloud, as air
Imperative, refreshful as dawn-dew.
Some evanescent hand on vapour scrawled
Historic of the soul, and heats anew
Its coloured lines where deeds of flesh stand bald.
True of the man, and of mankind 't is true.
Did we stout battle with the Shade, Despair,
Our cowardice, it blooms; or haply warred
Against the primal beast in us, and flung;
Or cleaving mists of Sorrow, left it starred
Above self-pity slain: or it was Prayer
First taken for Life's cleanser; or the tongue
Spake for the world against this heart; or rings
Old laughter, from the founts of wisdom sprung;
Or clap of wing of joy, that was a throb
From breast of Earth, and did no creature rob:

These quickening live. But deepest at her springs,
Most filial, is an eye to love her young.
And had we it, still see with it, alive
Is our lost garden, flower, bird and hive.
Blood of her blood, aim of her aim, are then
The green-robed and grey-crested sons of men:
She tributary to her aged restores
The living in the dead; she will inspire
Faith homelier than on the Yonder shores,
Abhorring these as mire,
Uncertain steps, in dimness gropes,
With mortal tremours pricking hopes,
And, by the final Bacchic of the lusts
Propelled, the Bacchic of the spirit trusts:
A fervour drunk from mystic hierophants;
Not utterly misled, though blindly led,
Led round fermenting eddies. Faith she plants
In her own firmness as our midway road:
Which rightly Youth has read, though blindly read;
Her essence reading in her toothsome goad;
Spur of bright dreams experience disenchants.
But love we well the young, her road midway
The darknesses runs consecrated clay.
Despite our feeble hold on this green home,
And the vast outer strangeness void of dome,
Shall we be with them, of them, taught to feel,
Up to the moment of our prostrate fall,
The life they deem voluptuously real,
Is more than empty echo of a call,
Or shadow of a shade, or swing of tides;
As brooding upon age, when veins congeal,

Grey palsy nods to think. With us for guides,
Another step above the animal,
To views in Alpine thought are they helped on.
Good if so far we live in them when gone!

And there the arrowy eagle of the height,
Becomes the little bird that hops to feed,
Glad of a crumb, for tempered appetite
To make it wholesome blood and fruitful seed.
Then Memory strikes on no slack string,
Nor sectional will varied Life appear:
Perforce of soul discerned in mind, we hear
Earth with her Onward chime, with Winter Spring.
And ours the mellow note, while sharing joys
No more subjecting mortals who have learnt
To build for happiness on equipoise,
The Pleasures read in sparks of substance burnt;
Know in our seasons an integral wheel,
That rolls us to a mark may yet be willed.
This, the truistic rubbish under heel
Of all the world, we peck at and are filled.

VERSES

PENETRATION AND TRUST

I

SLEEK as a lizard at round of a stone,
The look of her heart slipped out and in.
Sweet on her lord her soft eyes shone,
As innocents clear of a shade of sin.

II

He laid a finger under her chin,
His arm for her girdle at waist was thrown:
Now, what will happen and who will win,
With me in the fight and my lady lone?

III

He clasped her, clasping a shape of stone;
Was fire on her eyes till they let him in.
Her breast to a God of the daybeams shone,
And never a corner for serpent sin.

IV

Tranced she stood, with a chattering chin;
Her shrunken form at his feet was thrown:
At home to the death my lord shall win,
When it is no tyrant who leaves me lone!

NIGHT OF FROST IN MAY

With splendour of a silver day,
A frosted night had opened May:
And on that plumed and armoured night,
As one close temple hove our wood,
Its border leafage virgin white.
Remote down air an owl hallooed.
The black twig dropped without a twirl;
The bud in jewelled grasp was nipped;
The brown leaf cracked a scorching curl;
A crystal off the green leaf slipped.
Across the tracks of rimy tan,
Some busy thread at whiles would shoot;
A limping minnow-rillet ran,
To hang upon an icy foot.

In this shrill hush of quietude,
The ear conceived a severing cry.
Almost it let the sound elude,
When chuckles three, a warble shy,
From hazels of the garden came,
Near by the crimson-windowed farm.
They laid the trance on breath and frame,
A prelude of the passion-charm.

Then soon was heard, not sooner heard
Than answered, doubled, trebled, more,
Voice of an Eden in the bird
Renewing with his pipe of four
The sob: a troubled Eden, rich
In throb of heart: unnumbered throats
Flung upward at a fountain's pitch,
The fervour of the four long notes,
That on the fountain's pool subside,
Exult and ruffle and upspring:
Endless the crossing multiplied
Of silver and of golden string.
There chimed a bubbled underbrew
With witch-wild spray of vocal dew.

It seemed a single harper swept
Our wild wood's inner chords and waked
A spirit that for yearning ached
Ere men desired and joyed or wept.
Or now a legion ravishing
Musician rivals did unite
In love of sweetness high to sing
The subtle song that rivals light;
From breast of earth to breast of sky:
And they were secret, they were nigh:
A hand the magic might disperse;
The magic swung my universe.

Yet sharpened breath forbade to dream,
Where all was visionary gleam;
Where Seasons, as with cymbals, clashed;
And feelings, passing joy and woe,

Churned, gurgled, spouted, interflashed,
Nor either was the one we know:
Nor pregnant of the heart contained
In us were they, that griefless plained,
That plaining soared; and through the heart
Struck to one note the wide apart:—
A passion surgent from despair;
A paining bliss in fervid cold;
Off the last vital edge of air,
Leap heavenward of the lofty-souled,
For rapture of a wine of tears;
As had a star among the spheres
Caught up our earth to some mid-height
Of double life to ear and sight,
She giving voice to thought that shines
Keen-brilliant of her deepest mines;
While steely drips the rillet clinked,
And hoar with crust the cowslip swelled.

Then was the lyre of earth beheld,
Then heard by me: it holds me linked;
Across the years to dead-ebb shores
I stand on, my blood — thrill restores.
But would I conjure into me
Those issue notes, I must review
What serious breath the woodland drew;
The low throb of expectancy;
How the white mother-muteness pressed
On leaf and meadow-herb; how shook,
Nigh speech of mouth, the sparkle-crest
Seen spinning on the bracken-crook.

THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE

I

A Satyr spied a Goddess in her bath,
Unseen of her attendant nymphs; none knew.
Forthwith the creature to his fellows drew,
And looking backward on the curtained path,
He strove to tell; he could but heave a breast
Too full, and point to mouth, with failing leers:
Vainly he danced for speech, he giggled tears,
Made as if torn in two, as if tight pressed,
As if cast prone; then fetching whimpered tunes
For words, flung heel and set his hairy flight
Through forest-hollows, over rocky height.
The green leaves buried him three rounds of moons.
A senatorial Satyr named what herb
Had hurried him outrunning reason's curb.

II

'T is told how when that hieaway unchecked,
To dell returned, he seemed of tempered mood:
Even as the valley of the torrent rude,
The torrent now a brook, the valley wrecked.
In him, to hale him high or hurl aheap,
Goddess and Goatfoot hourly wrestled sore;
Hourly the immortal prevailing more:

Till one hot noon saw Meliboeus peep
From thicket-sprays to where his full-blown dame,
In circle by the lusty friskers gripped,
Laughed the showered rose-leaves while her limbs were stripped.
She beckoned to our Satyr, and he came.
Then twirled she mounds of ripeness, wreath of arms.
His hoof kicked up the clothing for such charms.

BREATH OF THE BRIAR

I

O BRIAR-SCENTS, on yon wet wing
Of warm South-west wind brushing by,
You mind me of the sweetest thing
That ever mingled frank and shy:
When she and I, by love enticed,
Beneath the orchard-apples met,
In equal halves a ripe one sliced,
And smelt the juices ere we ate.

II

That apple of the briar-scent,
Among our lost in Britain now,
Was green of rind, and redolent
Of sweetness as a milking cow.
The briar gives it back, well nigh
The damsel with her teeth on it;
Her twinkle between frank and shy,
My thirst to bite where she had bit.

EMPEDOCLES

I

He leaped. With none to hinder,
Of Aetna's fiery scoriae
In the next vomit-shower, made he
A more peculiar cinder.
And this great Doctor, can it be,
He left no saner recipe
For men at issue with despair?
Admiring, even his poet owns,
While noting his fine lyric tones,
The last of him was heels in air!

II

Comes Reverence, her features
Amazed to see high Wisdom hear,
With glimmer of a faunish leer,
One mock her pride of creatures.
Shall such sad incident degrade
A stature casting sunniest shade?
O Reverence! let Reason swim;
Each life its critic deed reveals;
And him reads Reason at his heels,
If heels in air the last of him!

TO COLONEL CHARLES

(Dying General C.B.B.)

I

An English heart, my commandant,
A soldier's eye you have, awake
To right and left; with looks askant
On bulwarks not of adamant,
Where white our Channel waters break.

II

Where Grisnez winks at Dungeness
Across the ruffled strip of salt,
You look, and like the prospect less.
On men and guns would you lay stress,
To bid the Island's foemen halt.

III

While loud the Year is raising cry
At birth to know if it must bear
In history the bloody dye,
An English heart, a soldier's eye,
For the old country first will care.

IV

And how stands she, artillerist,
Among the vapours waxing dense,
With cannon charged? 'T is hist! and hist!
And now she screws a gouty fist,
And now she counts to clutch her pence.

V

With shudders chill as aconite,
The couchant chewer of the cud
Will start at times in pussy fright
Before the dogs, when reads her sprite
The streaks predicting streams of blood.

VI

She thinks they may mean something; thinks
They may mean nothing: haply both.
Where darkness all her daylight drinks,
She fain would find a leader lynx,
Not too much taxing mental sloth.

VII

Cleft like the fated house in twain,
One half is, Arm! and one, Retrench!
Gambetta's word on dull MacMahon:
'The cow that sees a passing train:'
So spies she Russian, German, French.

VIII

She? no, her weakness: she unbraced
Among those athletes fronting storms!
The muscles less of steel than paste,
Why, they of nature feel distaste
For flash, much more for push, of arms.

IX

The poet sings, and well know we,
That 'iron draws men after it.'
But towering wealth may seem the tree
Which bears the fruit *Indemnity*,
And draw as fast as battle's fit,

X

If feeble be the hand on guard,
Alas, alas! And nations are
Still the mad forces, though the scarred.
Should they once deem our emblem Pard
Wagger of tail for all save war;—

XI

Mechanically screwed to flail
His flanks by Presses conjuring fear;—
A money-bag with head and tail;—
Too late may valour then avail!
As you beheld, my cannonier,

XII

When with the staff of Benedek,
On the plateau of Königgrätz,
You saw below that wedgeing speck;
Foresaw proud Austria rammed to wreck,
Where Chlum drove deep in smoky jets.

February 1887.

ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM

I

The day that is the night of days,
With cannon-fire for sun ablaze,
We spy from any billow's lift;
And England still this tidal drift!
Would she to sainted forethought vow
A space before the thunders flood,
That martyr of its hour might now
Spare her the tears of blood.

II

Asleep upon her ancient deeds,
She hugs the vision plethora breeds,
And counts her manifold increase
Of treasure in the fruits of peace.
What curse on earth's improvident,
When the dread trumpet shatters rest,
Is wreaked, she knows, yet smiles content
As cradle rocked from breast.

III

She, impious to the Lord of Hosts,
The valour of her offspring boasts,
Mindless that now on land and main
His heeded prayer is active brain.
No more great heart may guard the home,
Save eyed and armed and skilled to cleave
Yon swallower wave with shroud of foam,
We see not distant heave.

IV

They stand to be her sacrifice,
The sons this mother flings like dice,
To face the odds and brave the Fates;
As in those days of starry dates,
When cannon cannon's counterblast
Awakened, muzzle muzzle bowled,
And high in swathe of smoke the mast
Its fighting rag outrolled.

TARDY SPRING

Now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes;
Swift fly the fleeces,
Thick the blossom-flakes.

Now hill to hill has made the stride,
And distance waves the without end:
Now in the breast a door flings wide;
Our farthest smiles, our next is friend.
And song of England's rush of flowers
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,
That spins the lark for shine, for showers;
He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.
The stir in memory seem these things,
Which out of moistened turf and clay,
Astrain for light push patient rings,
Or leap to find the waterway.
'T is equal to a wonder done,
Whatever simple lives renew
Their tricks beneath the father sun,
As though they caught a broken clue:
So hard was earth an eyewink back;
But now the common life has come,
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,
The grasses one vast underhum.

A City clothed in snow and soot,
With lamps for day in ghostly rows,
Breaks to the scene of hosts afoot,
The river that reflective flows:
And there did fog down crypts of street
Play spectre upon eye and mouth: —
Their faces are a glass to greet
This magic of the whirl for South.
A burly joy each creature swells
With sound of its own hungry quest;
Earth has to fill her empty wells,
And speed the service of the nest;
The phantom of the snow-wreath melt,
That haunts the farmer's look abroad,
Who sees what tomb a white night built,
Where flocks now bleat and sprouts the clod.
For iron Winter held her firm;
Across her sky he laid his hand;
And bird he starved, he stiffened worm;
A sightless heaven, a shaven land.
Her shivering Spring feigned fast asleep,
The bitten buds dared not unfold:
We raced on roads and ice to keep
Thought of the girl we love from cold.

But now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes,
The heavens are out in fleeces,
And earth's green banner shakes.

EPITAPHS

M. M.

Who call her Mother and who calls her Wife
Look on her grave and see not Death but Life.

THE LADY C. M.

To them that knew her, there is vital flame
In these the simple letters of her name.
To them that knew her not, be it but said,
So strong a spirit is not of the dead.

J. C. M.

A fountain of our sweetest, quick to spring
In fellowship abounding, here subsides:
And never passage of a cloud on wing
To gladden blue forgets him; near he hides.

ISLET THE DACHS

Our Islet out of Helgoland, dismissed
From his quaint tenement, quits hates and loves.
There lived with us a wagging humourist
In that hound's arch dwarf-legged on boxing-gloves.

GORDON OF KHARTOUM

Of men he would have raised to light he fell:
In soul he conquered with those nerveless hands.
His country's pride and her abasement knell
The Man of England circled by the sands.

THE EMPEROR FREDERICK OF OUR TIME

With Alfred and St. Louis he doth win
Grander than crowned head's mortuary dome:
His gentle heroic manhood enters in
The ever-flowering common heart for home.

THE YEAR'S SHEDDINGS

The varied colours are a fitful heap:
They pass in constant service though they sleep;
The self gone out of them, therewith the pain:
Read that, who still to spell our earth remain.

NOTES

THEODOLINDA

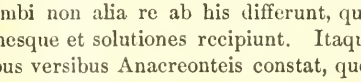
The legend of the Iron Crown of Lombardy, formed of a nail of the true Cross by order of the devout Queen Theodolinda, is well known. In this dramatic song she is seen passing through one of the higher temptations of the believing Christian.

PHAETHON

The Galliambic Measure

Hermann (*Elementa Doctrinae Metricae*), after citing lines from the Tragic poet Phrynichus and from the Comic, observes:

Dixi supra, Phrynichorum versus videri puros Ionicos esse. Id si verum est, Galliambi non alia re ab his differunt, quam quod anaclasin, contractionesque et solutiones recipiunt. Itaque versus Galliambicus ex duobus versibus Anacreonteis constat, quorum secundus catalecticus est, hac forma:



The wonderful *Attis* of Catullus is the one classic example. A few lines have been gathered elsewhere. Lord Tennyson's *Boadicea* rides over many difficulties and is a noble poem. Catullus makes general use of the variant second of the above metrical forms:

Mihi januae frequentes, mihi limina tepida:

With stress on the emotion;

Jam, jam dolet quod egi, jam jamque poenitet.

A perfect conquest of the measure is not possible in our tongue. For the sake of an occasional success in the velocity, sweep, volume of the line, it seems worth an effort; and, if to some degree serviceable for narrative verse, it is one of the exercises of a writer which readers may be invited to share.

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